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The Atlantic Monthly

MAY 1998

A Special Moment in History

The fate of the planet will be determined in the next few decades, through our technological, lifestyle, and population choices

by BILL
McKIBBEN

LICKS OF LOVE
IN THE
HEART OF
THE COLD WAR

A short
story
by JOHN
UPDIKE

NEW ENGLAND
PLACES

Some of our
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vacation
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PHOTOGRAPHY
IN THE
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by
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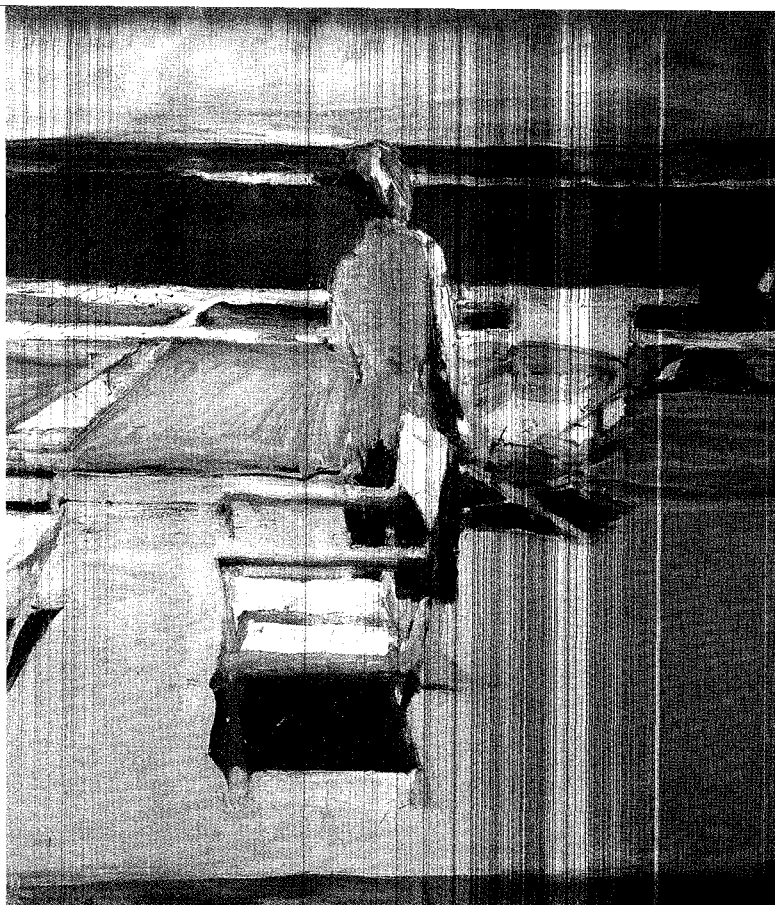
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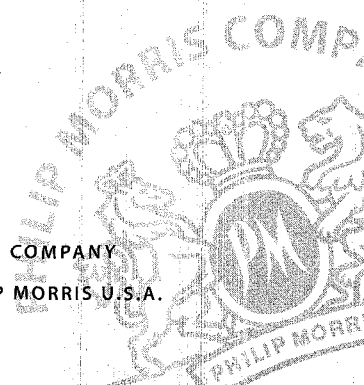
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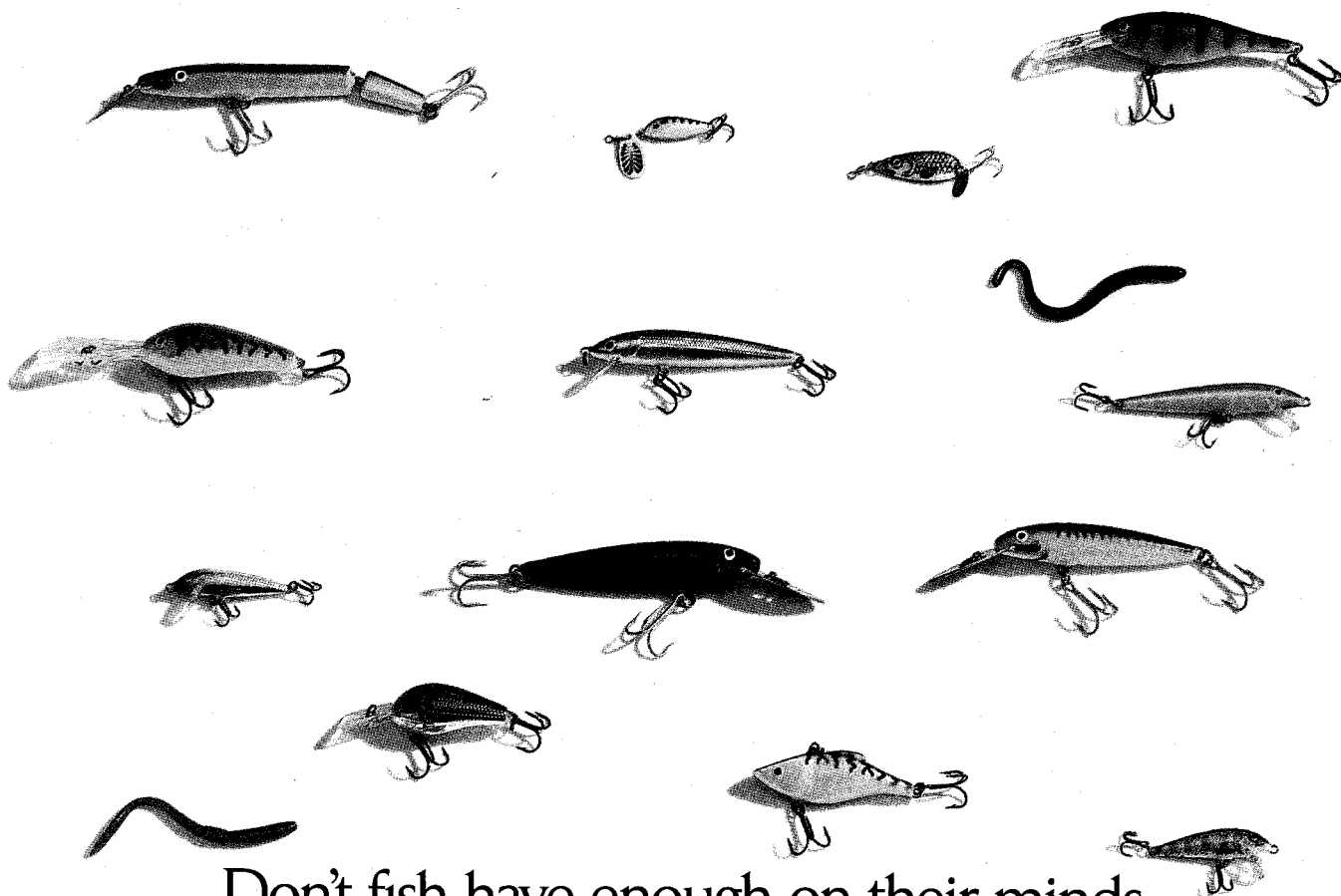
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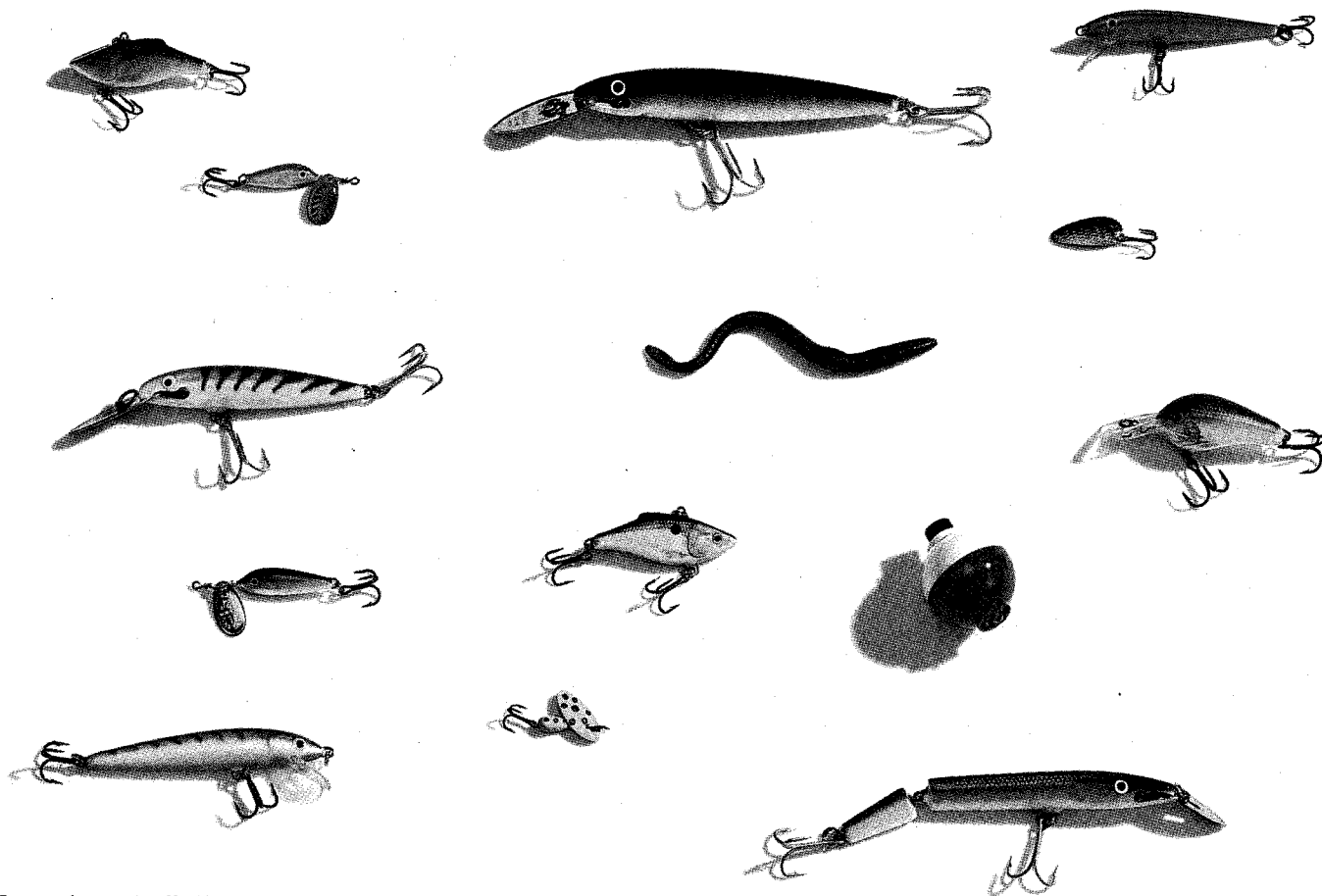
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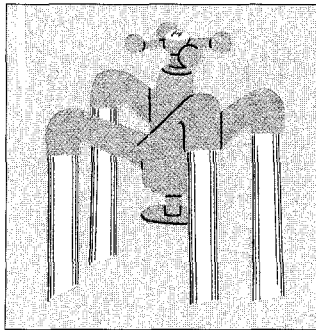
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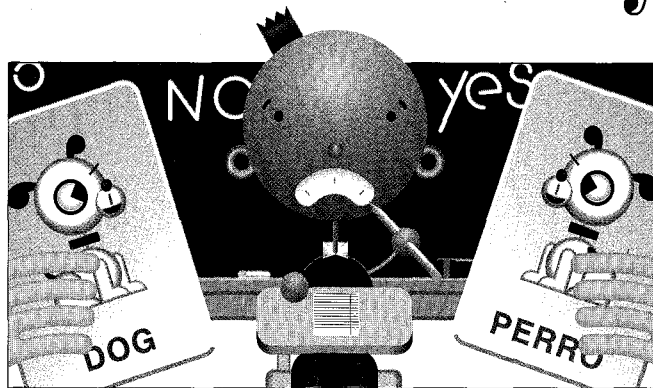
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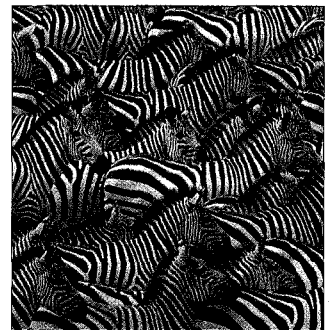
HONDA
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THE January, 1990, issue of *The Atlantic Monthly* contained a word portrait of a long-deceased hero of Canadian environmentalism. His name was Grey Owl, and he had described himself as half Apache, half Scot, and wholly committed to the protection of wildlife, four-footed and otherwise. As an author and a lecturer, Grey Owl had toured Canada and England, often dressed in buckskins and always preaching a gospel of preservation, of wilderness purity. Well into the article its author, Kenneth Brower, reminded readers of the astonishing truth: Grey Owl was not an Indian of any sort. He had been born Archie Belaney, in Hastings, England, in 1888, the son of a drunken scam artist who was exiled from England not long after Archie's birth. The tale of Archie's fascination with Indian lore, his eventual migration to Canada at eighteen, and his construction, out of whole cloth, of a new—eventually celebrated—persona is remarkable, made to order for a writer invariably engaged by questions of authenticity, and in particular by the struggle between what is real in the natural world and what is imagined on its behalf.

Brower, the author of "Photography in the Age of Falsifica-

tion," in this issue, has written for *The Atlantic* about the perils inherent in the captive breeding of condors, about the damage done to Hawaii's forest environment by rapacious wild pigs, about the unintended but remorseless slaughter of dolphins by tuna seiners using illegal fishing tactics, and many other matters. The natural world has many champions, but none, quite possibly, more conspicuous than Kenneth Brower.

Unlike Archie Belaney, Brower came to his calling naturally—one might say inevitably. His father, David Brower, is the founder of Friends of the Earth and a past director of the Sierra Club, and is one of America's most celebrated conservationists. Kenneth Brower, born in 1944, attended the University of California, Berkeley, and began editing books about nature when he was twenty. (The photograph at left, of the young Brower in 1967, is from the jacket flap of *Earth and the Great Weather*.) All told, he has written eleven books of his own, and co-authored or edited another thirteen. Brower lives in Oakland, California, with his daughter and son.

"Photography in the Age of Falsification" is Brower's sixteenth piece for *The Atlantic*. —THE EDITORS



JOHN P. MILTON

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LETTERS

The CIA

As a twenty-year veteran of the CIA, I found Edward G. Shirley's article "Can't Anybody Here Play This Game?" (February *Atlantic*) painfully accurate. Unlike him, however, I am still an active-duty case officer with the Agency's clandestine service. I can fault Shirley only for failing to mention the pitiful management that is now running this country's most sensitive intelligence-collection programs. I work with one of those programs. Today's Agency is troubled and is being torn apart from within by the very people who run the place. The best people are resigning because of bad management. The best case officers do not choose the management track. Those who do are devoured, politically, by a breed of Agency managers who have mastered the art of schmooze. They are the ones who were left standing when all the other case officers with better sense took early-outs and retirement incentives and bid the rest of us adieu. By and large, this group of dangerously ambitious people is charged with the day-to-day operations of the Agency. To a man (and woman) they are characterized by incredible egos and raging insecurities that have resulted in inconsistent and incestuous management practices.

Name withheld

Edward Shirley's article on the current demise of the CIA could not have been more timely. A former case officer myself, I recently returned from a gathering of old friends who are still Agency officers. The article was the centerpiece of conversation. Most of the officers felt it was accurate in its depiction of the problems plaguing the Agency. Every person present expressed disbelief at how wrong things had gone.

The path to reform is not going to be easy. The problem with trying to implement a solution is that the government can't simply lay off or fire people from

this profession. If morale is low and the ranks are purged, disillusionment among those fired will be severe, and they may decide to betray those they feel have betrayed them. The United States received a wave of disgruntled KGB officers after the fall of the USSR, as the organization to which they had pledged their lives crumbled and abandoned them. In some cases those that felt abandoned turned to the United States, and we would be in a very strong position today had Aldrich Ames's betrayal not resulted in all of them being executed. A similar wave from the United States to other intelligence services is not unthinkable.

Aldrich Ames was unique for his betrayal of the service, not for his alcoholism or incompetence. He blended in, and thus many within the Agency are convinced that there are more like him. Viewing him in isolation, one is struck by the fact that no one noticed his problems. Alcoholics and people plagued by other problems continue to hold senior or semi-senior positions within the Agency.

What is needed is a clandestine reorganization of the Agency. No fanfare, no media blitz on the "death of the CIA," just a quiet reorganization within the community. Covert Action should be shifted to the military Special Operations Forces. This can be accomplished by simply reducing the number of mandates given to the Agency for such action (presidential findings and notification of congressional committees are required for any covert action to take place). Over time, as veteran officers depart, money for new programs could be withheld, and all covert action could be conducted by the SOF, allowing the covert-action portion of the Agency to die off.

Human-intelligence collection should be cut back within the CIA, by encouraging retirement and buy-out packages for veteran officers. The training of junior officers should emphasize a fo-

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cused, reduced role of high quality. Congressional oversight could be effective in this effort. The Directorate of Administration, which exists to serve the three other directorates (Operations, Intelligence, and Science and Technology), should be abolished, with the relevant operations integrated into the existing directorates. Resources should be shifted by Congress to the other branches of the intelligence world, to help cover the transition period wherein an Agency focused on quality intelligence collection is established.

Name withheld

Edward G. Shirley replies:

Regarding Mr. X's remarks about the Directorate of Operations' "pitiful management": I did describe in my article the problem of upwardly mobile mediocrity, but Mr. X is right to fault me for not hammering home the point. I tried to put the DO's management into a historical context—to explain why it has over time tended to reward paper-pushing operatives and not officers who actually know something about the country and people they target. This historical explanation offers little consolation, however, to active-duty case officers like Mr. X, who must live with the depressing reality of CIA operations in the future. I wish Mr. X luck in his work—good case officers can still occasionally achieve worthwhile results, despite the DO's bureaucracy and abysmally low standards. But as his letter suggests, the CIA's "most sensitive" operations and case-officer morale will not improve without a thoroughgoing overhaul of the service which retires much of the senior cadre.

Which brings me to Mr. Y's thoughtful letter. If George Tenet, the director of central intelligence, or Congress through its power of the purse, doesn't retire or pink-slip a substantial number of operatives, the chances for Agency reform are poor. Though I appreciate Mr. Y's concern about the treasonous possibilities inherent in any layoff at the CIA, this is a risk that simply must be confronted. If you cannot fire useless or reform-hostile officers, then you cannot save the Directorate of Operations. Good young officers, who do the lion's share of the DO's work, will not hang around in appreciable numbers waiting for their less-

talented seniors, who control Agency promotions, to be pensioned off.

Concerning Mr. Y's other points on how to reorganize the intelligence community, I would say that they are interesting but not critical. Covert action is no longer a major factor in the lives of most case officers. It obviously gains a good deal of media attention, because when it involves paramilitary operations, it never stays secret. But the systemic problems of the clandestine service are primarily rooted in how the CIA conducts espionage, the profession that defines the DO. These problems do, however, spill over into "covert" action. The CIA teams dispatched to northern Iraq to assist the Iraqi opposition in the mid-1990s had few competent Arabic-speaking officers. In the Near East Division case officers who are engaged in espionage don't need to learn Middle Eastern languages to rise through the ranks.

Reform needs to focus primarily on people, operational methodology and accountability, and the DO's intelligence product, not structural reorganization. Directors of the CIA and the Directorate of Operations have been reorganizing the clandestine service for years, changing and abolishing names, offices, and targeting priorities, yet the DO's deterioration continues. I do, however, agree completely with Mr. Y on the need to cut back human-intelligence collection and to ensure good training for the service's young officers.

Climate Flip-flop

William H. Calvin ("The Great Climate Flip-flop," January *Atlantic*) makes some interesting and valid points, beginning with the fact that "global warming" is a misnomer for a phenomenon that should be referred to as anthropogenically induced climate change. Climate scientists have long understood that significant increases in atmospheric greenhouse-gas concentrations will lead to a response more complex than simple warming. Reports by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change in both 1991 and 1995 state clearly that we risk running into "climate surprises" brought about by feedback loops in the climate system. The sudden cooling Calvin describes is one example.

But the sudden cooling resulting from suppression of the North Atlantic conveyor which Calvin predicts is just one of the many possible outcomes of excessive and rapidly increasing greenhouse-gas loading. Beyond current model predictions, accelerated warming may also come about, through a variety of positive-feedback loops that are not yet modeled correctly. Examples are underestimated positive cloud and water-vapor feedbacks, whereby warming allows the air to hold more moisture, further increasing temperatures (water vapor is a greenhouse gas), allowing more water vapor to enter the atmosphere, and so on; unexpectedly large biospheric releases of carbon dioxide; and releases of methane (also a greenhouse gas) and gas hydrates from melting permafrost and gas hydrates in the Arctic. Unfortunately, we still know too little about these nonlinear feedbacks to predict the likelihood that a sudden warming or a sudden cooling will occur. This is not to say that scientific uncertainty implies that anthropogenically induced climate change should not be taken seriously. Indeed, it would be a real "climate surprise" if the ongoing large anthropogenically induced changes in atmospheric composition did not lead to significant changes in climate.

A second valuable point made by Calvin is that major decadal-scale fluctuations in climate would be detrimental to society. A booming population, coupled with increased consumption, has stressed many of the earth's ecosystems. Given that climate change would further stress these systems, it certainly would be prudent to examine how we might respond to a rapid cooling or warming. However, to postulate that a sudden rapid cooling induced by changes in ocean currents is likely to occur in the next hundred years is pure guesswork.

There is currently scant evidence for a causal link between decadal-scale fluctuations in climate and ocean circulation. While there is evidence that the two are correlated, ocean circulation may have changed as a result of a climate shift, rather than being the driver behind the shift.

To deduce that we are due for a major climatic change because the climatic stability of the past 10,000 years is unprecedented is also conjecture. The fact

that the climate has been so stable tells us that the climate of the past 10,000 years has been in a different regime from the previous 100 millennia. A further lack of parallel with the past is that greenhouse-gas concentrations are now at higher levels and are accumulating more rapidly than at any point in the entire period of Ice Ages. Making a direct correlation between past and future behavior is therefore highly uncertain.

Would a greenhouse warming freshen the North Atlantic enough to cause a thermocline collapse and then precipitate an abrupt global cooling, as Calvin suggests? Although we believe it is premature to extend this hypothesis beyond speculation, two important issues should be raised. First, the evidence from paleodata and climate models suggests that the cooling coincident with the thermosaline circulation changes is regional, limited to northern Europe. Second, the collective evidence from the scientific literature suggests that an anthropogenically induced climate change has been detected and that this change includes a *strengthening* of the North Atlantic circulating pattern. It is very likely that this circulation change is also responsible for the steady increase in density that has been observed in the North Atlantic over the past few decades. Thus one would have to say that the climate change that has been attributed to non-natural changes in the earth's radiative balance is also making it less likely that we will soon experience an abrupt cooling in the particular scenario outlined by Calvin.

The fact is that we are a long way from being able to forecast future climate accurately, particularly where rapid non-linear changes are involved. Acting on what we know—that greenhouse gases cause radiative forcings that affect climate—rather than on conjecture is imperative. It would indeed be prudent to “fight global warming by consuming less” carbon—or to learn how to consume carbon more efficiently, moving away from our present excessive use of fossil fuels. We should simultaneously continue to increase our understanding of the physical environment and to improve its representation in global climate models, as Calvin suggests.

However, investment on the scale necessary to find foolproof geo-engineering

solutions to rapid climate change could be pointless and may even be dangerous. Without a definite understanding of the effects of rapid climate change, computer-designed geo-engineering solutions are particularly risky, because they cannot be tested in the real world before implementation and could commit us to a cure that is worse than the disease.

What history has repeatedly shown is that geo-engineering solutions nearly always end up having unforeseen secondary effects. Such a solution proposed in a National Academy of Sciences report (“Policy Implications of Greenhouse Warming,” 1991) would have geo-engineered global-warming mitigation by periodically injecting reflecting particles into the stratosphere, thereby counteracting some of the effects of global warming. We knew this would work, because we had witnessed cooling from increased stratospheric aerosol loading after volcanic eruptions. We now know that such action would be likely to produce dramatic worldwide ozone depletion. Altering major ocean-circulation patterns could well have similarly detrimental effects on global ecosystems and mankind.

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Richard Gammon

Conway Leovy

J. Michael Wallace

*University of Washington
Seattle, Wash.*

William H. Calvin replies:

Just because great climate flips can happen in response to global warming doesn't mean that they are the most probable outcome of our current situation—what one might “forecast.” (That's one of the reasons I was careful not to “predict” a cooling in the next century.) The issue here is managing high-risk situations: how much effort should be expended on a less-likely possibility, particularly when symptoms suggesting that possibility have occurred many times in the past? There are many everyday examples of this in medicine, where the physician must often act on incomplete information because of the serious consequences of delay.

Suppose you are a patient, and that given your symptoms and lab findings, there

is an 80 percent chance that you've got disease X, a nuisance in the long run but not anything catastrophic. The symptoms, however, are also consistent with another, more serious disease, lymphoma, which can kill quickly and needs early treatment. Even though the chances are only 20 percent that you've got lymphoma, your physician may tell you that you need chemotherapy “for insurance against cancer.” You can't just wait to see what develops. The possible consequences of delay are simply too great. The physician who waits for absolute certainty may wind up with a dead patient.

That's our situation with gradual warming and abrupt cooling. It isn't that abrupt cooling is the most probable outcome in the next century but that an atmospheric warming from any cause appears to be capable of triggering a loss of the warm-water loop through the Labrador and Greenland Seas (the leading candidate for what has caused the observed abrupt global coolings of the past).

One should not get distracted by which-came-first issues (Is the warming our fault? Do winds “drive” the oceans or vice versa?) but focus on consequences—and particularly the possible consequences of postponing action, of simply waiting to see what develops.

Travels With Jeffrey

Jeffrey Tayler's delightful travelogue “A Greece to Be Discovered” (January *Atlantic*) refers to the isles of Greece as “pentametered by Homer.” *The Columbia Encyclopedia* says that all the poetry attributed to Homer was in dactylic hexameter—not five but six feet to a line. The only English example of that measure that I can snatch from memory is in Longfellow's *Evangeline*:

“This is the forest primeval. The murmuring pines and the hemlocks . . .”

Leon Lukaszewski

Walnut Creek, Calif.

If life in Moscow is making Jeffrey Tayler crabby, he's unfairly taking it out on the Moskovskiy Metropolitan (“A Means of Transport,” February *Atlantic*). I would guess that the subways in New York—to cite one example—would be much improved by the presence of “hectoring,” eagle-eyed attendants.





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Taylor's complaints about "sour-faced" Metro employees should not be the last word on the amazing and efficient Moscow subway system, which is highly valued and used—in safety—daily by millions. Like most big-city folk around the world, Muscovites do indeed wear "masks of indifference" when riding the subways, but I do not believe, as Taylor asserts, that riding it affords them a chance to "harden their characters." In fact the Metro is a world-class urban treasure, and Muscovites know it. Physically beautiful, the more than a hundred stations are clean and unvandalized, designed to be used, different from one another, and replete with friezes, frescoes, mosaics, and irreplaceable light fixtures. Soviet architects of the thirties contributed and designed stations in styles ranging from Beaux Arts to Art Nouveau to Art Deco to just plain gorgeous. There are statues and murals honoring ordinary people and historic figures. Yes, it was one of Stalin's giant, ambitious, difficult, and expensive projects (Khrushchev was its chief engineer), and we now know that Stalin was monstrous, but the subway is a success. And it has *always* been supervised—hence the attendants who "hector and berate"—for the safety of riders as well as of public property.

Eileen Garnett
Portland, Oreg.

Jeffrey Taylor replies:

I thank Mr. Lukaszewski for pointing out the correct meter of Homeric verse. The isles of Greece were indeed hexametered by Homer, not pentametered.

My taking to task "hectoring, sour-faced Metro employees" in the first part of "A Means of Transport" was not intended as the last word on the Moskovskiy Metropolitén: I concluded with a description of a friendly old codger and his humane expostulations. My last word was positive.

Furthermore, I had no desire to run down the architectural beauty of the Moscow Metro (or at least of its central stations; in fact only they are adorned with friezes, mosaics, and so on), which has been well documented elsewhere. The scolding attendants, especially those in booths under train stations like Belorusskaya, are an inescapable part of riding the Metro regularly, and they kin-

dle rancor in most passengers, not in me alone. Their hectoring deserves mention because it derives in part from Stalin's most enduring legacy: the mentality engendered by a state that subjugated and repressed the masses it ostensibly served—the same masses it so cynically glorified in Metro artwork.

Thus interpreting my article as a critique of Moscow municipal services misses the mark. It was an exploration of the way that a tragic past discolors the present—and the way that despite that past, some have managed to retain a warmth of spirit that lightens the mood of those with whom they come into contact.

A Moment of Democracy

The road to democracy in the Third World is indeed impeded by authoritarian detours and institutional potholes, as Robert D. Kaplan argues ("Was Democracy Just a Moment?" December *Atlantic*). But Kaplan slights the biggest obstacle: cultural values and attitudes that are congenial neither to democracy nor to economic dynamism and social justice. Alexis de Tocqueville, whom Kaplan cites, made the case for culture in *Democracy in America*—seventy years before Max Weber. Tocqueville argued that the American democratic experiment depended more than anything else on "the practical experience, the habits, the opinions, in short, . . . the customs of the Americans." Explaining the crucial importance of culture was "the principal object" of his book.

Thus Haiti's endless nightmare can be understood as chiefly the consequence of a culture powerfully influenced by traditional African culture, above all the voodoo religion, and the brutality of Haiti's experience as a French slave colony. Although the cultural problem is less acute in Hispanic and Portuguese America, the Iberian traditions of authoritarianism, centralization, and disrespect for the law leave recent experiments with democratic forms fragile in most Latin American countries. That includes Argentina, which Kaplan inexplicably identifies as "authentically democratic," its virtually unbroken history of authoritarian and illicit governments until 1983 notwithstanding.



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Kaplan's argument is further vitiated by his failure to address Francis Fukuyama's thesis that the world is inevitably if slowly moving toward the democratic-capitalist model, a forecast that the experiences of South Korea, Taiwan, Chile, and Turkey tend to corroborate.

Lawrence E. Harrison
Vineyard Haven, Mass.

Among the more remarkable statements made by Robert Kaplan is his claim that the late Sir Isaiah Berlin counts as a political idealist, in contrast to the more realistic (because authoritarian) Hobbes. Among political scientists and philosophers Berlin is deemed a profoundly sober realist, given his antagonism to any "theories" of justice or the good life that claim to abolish conflict and reconcile competing interests because the theorists "know" the ways either of nature or of history. The "idealists" whom Berlin opposed, whether of the right or of the left, naively believed in a final theoretical resolution of "the political problem." But this is evidently not realistic enough for Kaplan: Berlin,

unlike Hobbes, did not believe in "historical inevitability," which for Kaplan is the force that often makes democracy a luxury and economics, in its current incarnation as "the global marketplace," the emperor of us all.

The problem with Kaplan's take on world affairs might be called "a fear of justice." (A fear, I might add, that Berlin himself evinced from time to time.) I am quite willing to admit that democratic regimes can be both unstable and unjust, and that relatively authoritarian ones can be stable, at least for a time, and just, at least to an extent. But it would be hasty to infer from those premises, as Kaplan does, that antidemocratic and unjust regimes are tolerable to the extent that they preserve order and open the door to prosperity. One can always ask "Prosperity for whom?," "Order for whose sake?," and "At what cost?" To pretend that these answers don't matter, that order and equilibrium matter above all in the short term, is to render the notion of justice unintelligible—to replace it with "effectiveness" and to embody it in what the historian John Ralston Saul has called

"corporatism," which is the rule of society by technocratic political and economic elites who have no use for anything that is not quantifiable in the terms of fashionable theory.

The problems facing democracy are not, as Kaplan suggests, the product of historical forces beyond anyone's control. They are, as always, problems of political will and common decency. Democratic regimes bordering on anarchy, autocratic regimes running "successful" economies, and, indeed, our own decaying "advanced" civilization all lack justice, and the remedy for such lack is, as it has always been, exercising the good judgment to see what needs to be done and mustering the resolve to do it.

Michael J. Quirk
Bellerose, N.Y.

Robert D. Kaplan replies:

Tocqueville's emphasis on a particular kind of national culture as an ingredient of successful democracy is an interesting adjunct to my argument. I describe Argentina as democratic in the context of recent conditions there, at least through



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the end of Carlos Menem's first presidential term; obviously, Argentina has a long background of authoritarian rule. Francis Fukuyama writes that democratic capitalism may not succeed everywhere, but people will be happiest where it does—and by “democratic capitalism” he does not mean states without middle classes or functioning institutions that merely hold elections periodically. I agree with Fukuyama that people will be most content in successful democracies. But I do not believe that truly successful democracies will emerge in many places; rather, I observe many regimes that are officially democratic but unofficially illiberal and authoritarian, and the record bears me out (see Fareed Zakaria's cover story in the November/December issue of *Foreign Affairs*, titled “The Rise of Illiberal Democracy”).

To say that the problem with anything, let alone democracy, is one of “political will and common decency” is to occupy the comfort zone of sanctimony, because political will and common decency have been potent historically only when allied with some form of self-interest. In truth,

self-interest has always been the crucial element in any political future. George Washington grasped this intuitively when he observed that even America's uplifting form of patriotism “will not endure unassisted by Interest.” A tenet of realism is that there will never be sufficient political will and common decency to deal adequately with many problems, and so the finest statesmen concern themselves with managing the world as it is, rather than seeking a world that will never be.

Sir Isaiah Berlin was many things: intellectual historian, humanist, and so on. Categorizing him is thus especially difficult. Yet his humanism and his opposition to authoritarianism stand out. But a realist accepts the world as given, and this world has always borne a heavy imprint of authoritarianism—even today, after the fall of communism.

Advice & Consent

As a scientist and an editor of Victor A. McKusick's medical-genetics database *Online Mendelian Inheritance in*

Man, I must too often rush through the published descriptions of genetic diseases and cut to the quick—verify research data, edit for style, check the spelling of disorders such as *fibrodysplasia ossificans progressiva*. Seldom have I the time to step back and ponder the bigger picture, to synthesize disparate discoveries into a cohesive story about a complex syndrome such as FOP. Even more unsettling is the distance I often feel from the afflicted: after all, they are the reason for which our biomedical-research enterprise exists.

“A Few Hundred People Turned to Bone” (February *Atlantic*) is a rare article indeed. Thomas Maeder both intelligently assembles the perplexing science behind this devastating condition and gives faces and voices to its victims. Indeed, I am reminded by the author that “victims” is a fallacious term. As Maeder shows, those who survive and persevere under such duress have much to teach the rest of us about the true value of life.

Mark H. Paalman
Glen Burnie, Md.



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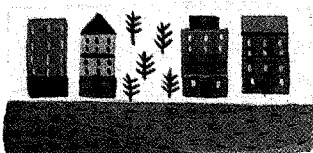


Government

May 26: Starting today the federal government will, quite literally, become more involved in the nuts and bolts of society, as legislation intended to ensure greater quality control over many types of fasteners takes effect. The Fastener Quality Act was passed in 1990, after Congress determined that mismarked, improperly made, and counterfeited items such as nuts, bolts, washers, and screws had led to serious accidents in U.S. industry and in military operations. The act requires that manufacturers test their fasteners in an accredited laboratory and register their insignia—the markings usually appearing on fastener heads—with the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office, so that defective fasteners can be readily traced. Manufacturers have complained because the rules do not apply to imported fasteners in pre-assembled items, pointing out that their business, along with public safety, could suffer as a result.

Demographics

May marks the peak of New York City's "floater season"—the springtime surfacing of bodies in the city's rivers. Nearly a quarter of the bodies pulled from the city's rivers last year—11 of 47—were retrieved in May. Bodies tend to rise to the surface in the spring because warm water hastens decomposition, which produces internal gases; these in turn make bodies buoyant. In addition, spring



currents may dislodge corpses caught on underwater debris. The number of bodies retrieved from New York's waterways has steadily declined over the past 30 years, from annual counts in the hundreds to fewer than 50. According to the police department's Harbor Unit, reasons for the decline may include a reduction in violent crime; a waterfront that has become significantly less active commercially, and whose docks are equipped with safer, automated loading and unloading systems; and, at present, the strong economy, for many of the bodies that wind up in rivers are thought to be suicides.



Environment

This month biologists will install buoys off the coast of Florida as part of a project dubbed ECOHAB, for Ecology and Oceanography of Harmful Algae Blooms—the first coordinated federal effort to study red tide, a microscopic organism that periodically generates enormous colonies, or blooms, that devastate fish. Red tide is also to blame for deaths among dolphins, manatees, whales, and pelicans, and for seafood poisoning among human beings. The buoys will monitor such things as temperature, salinity, wind speed, and ocean currents—data that could provide advance warning of blooms as well as clues to what circumstances are conducive to them. Researchers will also regularly be collecting samples of red tide in order to study the organism and its reproductive dynamics. They hope that their efforts might eventually lead to a biological control for red tide—for example, a virus or bacterium that would kill or consume that organism alone.

Food

May 30: The latest deadline in an ongoing meat-trade dispute between the United States and the European Union. The EU has threatened to suspend beef imports from the United States—already reduced, but still worth some \$35 million a year—unless, by today, the U.S. Department of Agriculture implements a plan for bringing meat-inspection practices in line with European standards. As of this writing, the USDA has not indicated how it will respond. EU inspectors last year deemed that the U.S. testing program to control drug residues, especially of growth-promoting hormones, does not provide "an equivalent level of consumer health guarantees." The dispute has long roots: in 1989 the EU banned meat from U.S. cattle that had been treated with growth hormones. (The ban was overturned last year by the World Trade Organization, on the grounds that the hormones do not pose a health risk.) For its part, the United States began restricting imports of European beef and lamb last December, because of fears of mad-cow disease, and has sent a team to EU countries to observe residue-testing procedures there.



The Skies

May 11: Full Moon, also known this month as the Milk or Planting Moon and the Moon of the Shedding Ponies. Most of the month's other celestial highlights occur in the hour before dawn: on the 21st the waning Moon lies close to Jupiter; on the 22nd Saturn, Venus, the crescent Moon, and Jupiter form a long arc above the eastern horizon; and on the 29th Venus and Saturn lie close together low in the east.



Arts & Letters

May 3: The first comprehensive U.S. retrospective in 20 years of the American abstractionist Mark Rothko—a painter known for his huge canvases and use of broad bands of color—opens today in the National Gallery of Art, in Washington, D.C. The exhibit will include 115 works spanning Rothko's career of nearly 50 years, with emphasis on his surrealist period, of the mid-1940s, and classic period, of the 1950s. After closing in Washington on August 16, the exhibit will travel to the Whitney Museum of American Art, in New York, and the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris.

50 Years Ago

W. Somerset Maugham, writing in the May, 1948, issue of *The Atlantic Monthly*: "There is something to be said for the simple people who look upon marriage as a satisfactory conclusion to a work of fiction. I think they do so because they have a deep, instinctive feeling that by mating a man and a woman have fulfilled their biological function; the interest which it is natural to feel in the steps that have led to this consummation, the birth of love, the obstacles, the misunderstandings, the avowals, now yields to its result, their issue, which is the generation that will succeed them. To nature each couple is but a link in a chain and the only importance of the link is that another link may be added to it. This is the novelist's justification for the happy ending."





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The Oasis of Memory

*An outpost of stability in the shifting
sands of our time*

NEAR the beginning of his great work *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II* the historian Fernand Braudel described the vast nomadic regimes that held sway for centuries throughout Europe and North Africa, until they were displaced by the more sedentary economies of town and field. In nomadic societies, as generations of anthropologists have pointed out, ever-moving populations pursue livelihoods and maintain social ties over vast expanses of geography. Distinctions between life and work verge on the meaningless. "News" becomes elusive (and untrustworthy), but all the more sought after. Memory, though intangible, serves as a major source of continuity. "That this life is hard will be easily imagined," Braudel wrote. "That it has its own charms, with the aid of poetry and illusion, must also be accepted."

The Mediterranean was published half a century ago.

Braudel died in 1985. Had it occurred to him that nomadism of some sort might be the hallmark not only of a distant past but also of a post-industrial future? He never set eyes, surely, on the Country Coach company's Magna line of \$300,000 recreational vehicles, which come equipped with a complete set of household appliances, a computerized chassis-balancing system, and a wine cellar, and can be ordered in a nomadically correct color called Sand Storm. "Living out of a car" was once synonymous with "living on Skid Row," but according to the Recreation Vehicle Industry Association, some 25 million Americans now live out of their cars in a state of affluent peripateticism for part of the year. (America's RV herd numbers upwards of nine million vehicles.) Manufacturers report a

surge in sales of luxury cars fitted out as offices, allowing owners to remain linked to headquarters by phone, fax, and modem while traveling. Even standard versions of ordinary cars seem to anticipate a state of continuous tribal excursion. A typical Dodge Caravan offers twelve built-in cup holders; the new Chevy Venture offers seventeen. A full workstation

(computer, printer, desk, filing compartment) has been designed for strapping into any front passenger seat.

■ ■ ■

"The simple fact is," the ethnologist Philip Carl Salzman writes, "that the path from nomad to sedentary is not one way; on the contrary, the shift from the sedentary to the nomadic way of life has been frequent and widespread over historical time, and is in many regions an ongoing process." Pedestrians everywhere move about with nylon-and-Velcro saddlebags affixed to hips and shoulders, and special receptacles for liquid; more than 40 million

carry pagers. Perhaps soon they will also wear around their necks a lightweight pressurized canister now advertised in catalogues—"your own personal, portable source of clean air." One of the best-selling items of luggage at Patagonia stores is the "Maximum Legal Carry-On" bag, which enables users to pack dense amounts of electronic gear and other life-support apparatus into a container guaranteed to fit into the overhead

storage bin on commercial aircraft. Observe the contents of a stranger's briefcase the next time one is opened near you; in all likelihood, the owner could be transported unexpectedly to Alma Ata or Baku and yet retain full access to money, power, and freshness of breath. The Media Laboratory at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology has begun to design comput-



by Cullen Murphy

Illustration by Dave Calver

MAY 1998

When did every place
start to feel like the same place?

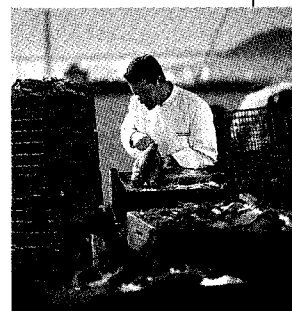


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"The enhancement of investment opportunity, of personal autonomy, and of political independence can militate in favor of the nomadic life," Salzman observes. An acceleration in the movement of people from job to job, and of jobs themselves from city to city and country to country, is by now well established. Locales where Americans in significant proportions have owned their homes for as long as thirty years now occupy a shrinking domain in the heartland and New England. Last year, for the first time, the amount of money Americans spent on meals outside the home surpassed the amount they spent on meals inside the home. Medical services once provided to bedridden patients have in many cases been replaced by "ambulatory care." Dual citizenship, a consequence of natal accidents and legal quirks, has proliferated by several orders of magnitude as wandering tribal groups collide and propagate. (In one recent year the most popular name for newborn Hispanic males in New York and newborn Asian males in San Francisco was Kevin.) Universities are moving away from the system known as tenure (the very word harks back to a regime of stable landholding) and toward reliance on a migratory professoriat. More than 40 percent of college teachers are essentially day laborers, working at temporary jobs or on part-time schedules.

Greater mobility is evident not only in the spatial dimension but also in the temporal one. A growing share of the work force toils outside the traditional dawn-to-dusk workday. "Now, venturing into the night," the sociologist Murray Melbin writes, "we have the same motives as our predecessors who migrated geographically." Some analysts, including those at *The Economist*, ascribe the low unemployment in the United States today in part to the fact that more and more American businesses are open around the clock. The term "hot-desking" describes the assignment of employees on different shifts to a single office, desk, and computer—a workplace version of vacation-home timesharing, or of the shipboard practice of sequential bunking. To accommodate travelers for whom the conventions of diurnal rhythm have become impracticable, the Hilton hotel chain offers "Sleep-Tight Rooms" with circadian light boxes, special soundproofing, and other features designed to induce restful sleep at unlikely hours.

■ ■ ■

Braudel was fascinated by the way evolving social facts show up in social *mentalités*. It is not hard, obviously, to discern a nomadic sensibility in the diffusion of such terms as "grazing," "surfing," and "browsing," or in the popularity of books by Bruce Chatwin, or in the way the continuous loop of the twenty-four-hour news cycle has become a unifying social feature. ("What is the news?" asked Wilfred Thesiger, a mid-century chronicler of Bedouin life in Araby. "It is the question which follows every encounter in the desert even between

strangers. Given a chance the Bedu will gossip for hours . . . and nothing is too trivial for them to recount.") But traces of that sensibility show up in subtler ways as well. For instance, cats that might once as a class have been hunted down as "strays" seem lately to have found cultural affinity: people who would preserve the nomadic alley-cat lifestyle have organized themselves into a defensive National Feral Cat Network. Scholars who study seventeenth- and eighteenth-century piracy are detecting worthy elements in the pirates' vagabondish ways—"floating democratic commonwealths," their shipboard politics have lately been called by one scholar. Another scholar has celebrated "the uniquely free-floating social dynamics of pirate culture." And then there is the recent example of Vernon Pierce, a sometime resident of Glendale, Arizona, whose own free-floating social dynamics kept him so constantly on the move that within a few years he had collected four wives in three states. A newspaper account of his sentencing noted that Pierce "had to make notes to himself to keep his stories straight."

The Pierce case offers an inadvertent reminder that for societies as for individuals, one of the greatest challenges posed by nomadism is the preservation of memory. It is here, perhaps, that modern nomadism departs most sharply from the more traditional kind, in which prodigious feats of memory—involving legend and lore, poetry and genealogy, profit and loss—secured links among individuals and generations. Pharmacologists, to be sure, are experimenting with powerful drugs that could one day enhance the memory of specific people, but the ongoing erosion of collective memory is difficult to deny. Education remains tantamount to individualized foraging. History is a matter of personal choice.

If we are going to travel further along the nomadic path, then might it not make sense to revive one key element of preliterate nomadic culture—the memorization of a few basic dicta we could all hold in common? Memorization is an antique skill that has heedlessly been allowed to atrophy. The word "rote" tends to be employed these days solely with a pejorative inflection, as if rote memory were not a resource or a tool. I would propose the creation of a kind of oasis of memory. And I would suggest, as a start, these few basics: the "Rules of Civility" from George Washington's childhood copybook; the biblical Song of Songs; Chapter Fourteen ("Mealtime Manners") of Emily Post's *Etiquette*; the preamble of the Constitution of the United States; Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech; the official baseball rulebook; the *Maxims* of La Rochefoucauld; Chapter Seven ("Tires, Wheels, Brakes, and Suspension") of the Readers Digest Family Handyman guide *Simple Car Care & Repair*; Chapter Ten ("some are more equal than others") of George Orwell's *Animal Farm*; the category "Anonymous" in Bartlett's *Familiar Quotations*; the words to "Louie, Louie." When students are ready to move on to second grade, they can add much more.

That this task could be hard will be easily imagined. That it has its own charms must also be accepted. ☼



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The Case Against Bilingual Education

Why even Latino parents are rejecting a program designed for their children's benefit

BILINGUAL education is a classic example of an experiment that was begun with the best of humanitarian intentions but has turned out to be terribly wrongheaded. To understand this experiment, we need to look back to the mid-1960s, when the civil-rights movement for African-Americans was at its height and Latino activists began to protest the damaging circumstances that led to unacceptably high proportions of school dropouts among Spanish-speaking children—more than 50 percent nationwide. Latino leaders borrowed the

strategies of the civil-rights movement, calling for legislation to address the needs of Spanish-speaking children—Cubans in Florida, Mexicans along the southern border, Puerto Ricans in the Northeast. In 1968 Congress approved a bill filed by Senator Ralph Yarborough, of Texas, aimed at removing the language barrier to an equal education. The Bilingual Education Act was a modestly funded (\$7.5 million for the first year) amendment to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, intended to help poor Mexican-American chil-

dren learn English. At the time, the goal was “not to keep any specific language alive,” Yarborough said. “It is not the purpose of the bill to create pockets of different languages through the country . . . but just to try to make those children fully literate in English.”

English was not always the language of instruction in American schools. During the eighteenth century classes were conducted in German, Dutch, French, and Swedish in some schools in Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Virginia. From the mid nineteenth to the early twentieth century, classes were taught in German in several cities across the Midwest. For many years French was taught and spoken in Louisiana schools, Greek in Pittsburgh. Only after the First World War, when German was proscribed, did public sentiment swing against teaching in any language but English.

These earlier decisions on education policy were made in school, church, city, or state. Local conditions determined local school policy. But in 1968, for the first time, the federal government essentially dictated how non-English-speaking children should be educated. That action spawned state laws and legal decisions in venues all the way up to the

by **Rosalie Pedalino Porter**

Senator Ralph Yarborough, of

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Supreme Court. No end of money and effort was poured into a program that has since become the most controversial arena in public education.

IN simplest terms, bilingual education is a special effort to help immigrant children learn English so that they can do regular schoolwork with their English-speaking classmates and receive an equal educational opportunity. But what it is in the letter and the spirit of the law is not what it has become in practice. Some

An experimental idea has produced an industry—and the extended segregation of students.

experts decided early on that children should be taught for a time in their native languages, so that they would continue to learn other subjects while learning English. It was expected that the transition would take a child three years.

From this untried experimental idea grew an education industry that expanded far beyond its original mission to teach English and resulted in the extended segregation of non-English-speaking students. In practice, many bilingual programs became more concerned with teaching in the native language and maintaining the ethnic culture of the family than with teaching children English in three years.

Beginning in the 1970s several notions were put forward to provide a rationale, after the fact, for the bilingual-teaching experiment. José Cárdenas, the director emeritus of the Intercultural Development Research Association, in San Antonio, and Blandina Cárdenas (no relation), an associate professor of educational administration at the University of Texas at San Antonio, published their "theory of incompatibilities." According to this theory, Mexican-American children in the United States are so different from "majority" children that they must be given bilingual and bicultural instruc-

tion in order to achieve academic success. Educators were convinced of the soundness of the idea—an urgent need for special teaching for non-English-speaking children—and judges handed down court decisions on the basis of it.

Jim Cummins, a bilingual-education theorist and a professor of education at the University of Toronto, contributed two hypotheses. His "developmental interdependence" hypothesis suggests that learning to read in one's native language facilitates reading in a second language. His "threshold" hypothesis suggests that children's achievement in the second language depends on the level of their mastery of their native language and that the most-positive cognitive effects occur when both languages are highly developed. Cummins's hypotheses were interpreted to mean that a solid foundation in native-language literacy and subject-matter learning would best prepare students for learning in English. In practice these notions work against the goals of bilingual education—English-language mastery and academic achievement in English in mainstream classrooms.

Bilingual education has heightened awareness of the needs of immigrant, migrant, and refugee children. The public accepts that these children are entitled to special help; we know that the economic well-being of our society depends on maintaining a literate population with the academic competence for higher education and skilled jobs. The typical complaint heard years ago, "My grandfather came from Greece [or Sicily or Poland] and they didn't do anything special for him, and he did okay," no longer figures in the public discussion.

Bilingual education has brought in extra funding to hire and train paraprofessionals, often the parents of bilingual children, as classroom aides. Career programs in several school districts, among them an excellent one in Seattle that was in operation through early 1996, pay college tuition for paraprofessionals so that they may qualify as teachers, thus attracting more teachers from immigrant communities to the schools. Large school districts such as those in New York and Los Angeles have long had bilingual professionals on their staffs of psychologists, speech therapists, social workers, and other specialists.

Promoting parental understanding of

American schools and encouraging parental involvement in school activities are also by-products of bilingual education. Workshops and training sessions for all educators on the historical and cultural backgrounds of the rapidly growing and varied ethnic communities in their districts result in greater understanding of and respect for non-English-speaking children and their families. These days teachers and school administrators make an effort to communicate with parents who have a limited command of English, by sending letters and school information to them at home in their native languages and by employing interpreters when necessary for parent-teacher conferences. In all these ways bilingual education has done some good.

BUT has it produced the desired results in the classroom? The accumulated research of the past thirty years reveals almost no justification for teaching children in their native languages to help them learn either English or other subjects—and these are the chief objectives of all legislation and judicial decisions in this field. Self-esteem is not higher among limited-English students who are taught in their native languages, and stress is not higher among children who are introduced to English from the first day of school—though self-esteem and stress are the factors most often cited by advocates of bilingual teaching.

The final report of the Hispanic Dropout Project (issued in February) states,

While the dropout rate for other school-aged populations has declined, more or less steadily, over the last 25 years, the overall Hispanic dropout rate started higher and has remained between 30 and 35 percent during that same time period . . . 2.5 times the rate for blacks and 3.5 times the rate for white non-Hispanics.

About one out of every five Latino children never enters a U.S. school, which inflates the Latino dropout rate. According to a 1995 report on the dropout situation from the National Center on Education Statistics, speaking Spanish at home does not correlate strongly with dropping out of high school; what does correlate is having failed to acquire English-language ability. The NCES report states,

(Continued on page 38)

MAY
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PREVIEW

DANCE

Giselle's
Celebrated
Stars

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as Medea

FILM

Down and Out
in Ukraine

POPULAR MUSIC

The Spirit of
Robert Johnson

JAZZ

Scotfield Grooves
with Medeski
Martin and Wood

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Dance and Theater

BY NANCY DALVA AND JOHN ISTEL

IT TAKES TWO

A susceptible young woman. Her devoted mother. A powerful man whose ring is worn by a similarly powerful woman. Fascinated and horrified bystanders. A whistle blower. And, hot on the trail, a prosecutor backed by a like-minded team. Washington, D.C., circa winter of 1998? No, the ever-popular ballet *Giselle*, circa 1841. In this work—the very epitome of the Romantic movement in dance—the eponymous heroine is a gullible village girl; her worried mother



Amanda McKerron as Giselle

is named Berthe; the powerful man is Albrecht, Duke of Silesia (disguised for a time as a commoner); his intended is the well-dressed Bathilde; the vengeful whistle blower, a gamekeeper, is one Hilari-on. The prosecutor is the scary Myrtha, whose night-of-the-living-dead attendants can hound a man to death. The book, by Vernoy de Saint-Georges, Théophile Gautier, and Jean Coralli, is one that—despite a very much of-its-day perfume—has been set and reset over the years, with artistic directors transporting Jules Perrot and Jean Coralli's choreography to various times and climes (including the Dance Theatre of Harlem's ingenious Creole versions). The best *Giselles* cleave to tradition, providing a frame for the juicy lead roles. Among the most celebrated twosomes were Alicia Alonso and Igor Youskevitch (whose offstage romance spiced up the on-stage proceedings); Margot Fonteyn and Rudolf Nureyev (her mad scene was a delicate unraveling horrific in its detail); and Carla Fracci and Erik Bruhn (the most romantic of ballerinas and the most noble of classicists). This month and next in New York, American Ballet Theatre offers no fewer than six pairings from its current starry roster (May 21–23 and June 16–18 at the Metropolitan Opera House; 212-362-6000). Tomorrow's legends will depend on the dancers of today: McKerron and Malakhov; Ferri and Bocca; Ananiashvili and Graffin; Kent and Carreño; Tuttle and Corella; Jaffe and Stiefel. What fun it would be to see them all; this is a story in which the casting tells the tale.

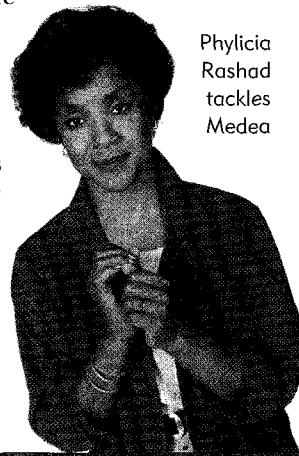
—N.D.

FROM SITCOM MOM TO A WOMAN OF SCORN

For Kenny Leon, the artistic director of Atlanta's Alliance Theatre Company, casting Phylicia Rashad as Medea was as American as, well, Mom and apple pie. Yes, the princess of Colchis murders her kids in Euripides' tragedy; and no, Rashad, best known for the years she spent playing Clair Huxtable opposite Bill Cosby on TV, wouldn't be considered typecasting. But Leon believes it's a natural way to make *Medea* relevant for the Media Age. "If everybody's Mom—which is how Phylicia is known from television—can kill

her kids, what does that say about our society?" he asks. Since taking over the Alliance, in 1990, Leon has raised national awareness of the company while diversifying its offerings: he premiered the Tony Award-winning *The Last Night of Ballyhoo*, produced most of August Wilson's plays, and stages an annual *Christmas Carol* whose Ghost of

Christmas Present wears dreadlocks and a kilt. Little surprise, then, that Leon's *Medea* (May 7–June 13; 404-733-5000) focuses on the regal couple's cultural clash to highlight the acrimony in Jason and Medea's matrimony. "Because of the world Medea was leaving and the world she was entering, which was Jason's world, I thought they should look different visually and culturally," Leon says. "It was important to me that Medea be black and Jason be white." There's no doubt in Leon's mind that Rashad has the chops for one of the theater's most demanding roles: "Most people don't know she was trained for the stage at Howard University. Phylicia has the talent to play an extreme range of characters." —J.I.



Phylicia Rashad tackles Medea

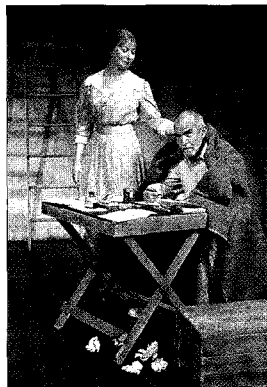
THE PLAYWRIGHT AT THE HELM

As a playwright, Athol Fugard has always proved to be a master landscape artist. For most of the past forty years his keenly honed works have explored the blood knot tying his characters to the tragic terrain of his homeland—South Africa. Written by a white man under apartheid, Fugard's plays offered audiences their first chance to see blacks and whites interact, linked by his lyrical dialogue. While the setting often shifted, from the coffee shop in "*Master Harold*" . . . and the boys to the carnival entryway in *Playland*, his focus on his country's inner, moral peaks and valleys never wavered. Since the fall of apartheid Fugard has been sketching interior landscapes in wistful memory plays. In *The Captain's Tiger*, which receives its U.S. premiere at the McCarter Theatre, in Princeton, New Jersey, this month

(May 5–24; 609-683-8000), Fugard clearly senses enough peace in the political scenery to write more personally. It's his second post-apartheid play produced in the United States, and as with *Valley Song*, the first, Fugard directs and acts in it. But if *Valley Song* explored the future, through a young black teen who wants to be a famous singer, *The Captain's Tiger* looks back, to trace this writer's beginnings as a twenty-year-old steward on a merchant-marine ship. Fugard plays a figure called "The Author" as well, giving the play its overly introspective patches. But few writers have earned the right to indulge such meanderings into memory;

Fugard remains an enlightening tour guide to his country's soul. —J.I.

Nancy Dalva is the author of *Dance Ink*: Photographs. John Istel is a senior editor at Stagebill.



The Captain's Tiger

Film

BY ELLA TAYLOR

THE CON GAMES PEOPLE PLAY

If it were merely another clever thriller about corporate intrigue, David Mamet's new movie would still be a great night out at the multiplex. But *The Spanish Prisoner* is also a malevolently funny chapter in the chronicles of the great con game that, in the gospel according to Mamet (who wrote the screenplay for the serendipitously topical *Wag the Dog*), lies at the core of American life. Campbell Scott plays ordinary Joe Ross, an honest but insecure young go-getter from the wrong side of the tracks who, while trying to reap his cut of the profits from a "formula" he invented for a "process" in a company whose product is never named, becomes the bull's-eye in multiple stings by strangers claiming to be his protectors. Accepting an offer of help from the high-living Jimmy Dell (played



Scott is caught in the scam

with casual menace by Steve Martin), who may or may not be a businessman, Joe finds his world transformed into an ominous funhouse of portents and coincidences that are either pregnant with meaning or entirely without significance. Each successful con forces Joe back on a new rescuer, until he comes to rest, or so he believes, under the wing of a pretty and apparently ingenuous company secretary (Rebecca Pidgeon). Couched in the deliberately stilted dialogue and stiff acting that in Mamet's work flags the treachery of received language and manifest reality, this elegantly tailored movie reaches into and beyond the conventions of the thriller to comment on the lethal stew of innocence, deception, and venality that is, in every sense, business as usual in America.

BRITAIN'S BACK-TO-THE-LAND MOVEMENT

Heartening though it is to see modest little films like *The Full Monty* and *The Crying Game* earn box-office gold this side of the Atlantic, the trend also has its downside. While American distributors snap up British comedies with more haste than discrimination, a freshly juiced British film industry happily lobs indifferent TV movies across the water as fast as they can be cobbled together. One such is *The Land Girls*, a Second World War tale that manages to tame its promising material—the story of the young women who fanned out through the British countryside to work the farms while the men went into battle—into such rosy flab that you feel as though you're trapped for life inside a particularly mushy Hallmark card with a hint of bodice-ripper. Directed by David Leland, who made the far superior *Wish You Were Here*, the movie stars Catherine McCormack (who played Mel Gibson's doomed wife in *Braveheart*), Rachel Weisz, and Anna Friel as three dewy-eyed maidens, carefully accented to run the gamut of the English class structure, who till the soil for a farm couple by day and vie for the body of the couple's hand-

some son (Steven Mackintosh) by night. Much female bonding and quarreling ensues, amorous fortunes rise and fall, the group becomes a family, and the occasional enemy plane crashes and burns for added excitement. Banalized into insignificance, the true drama of the land girls' heroic and largely unsung role in the war slinks off, unnoticed, into deep background. The 1940s dresses, however, are to die for.

The land girls



DESPERATE TIMES

Set in brassy post-Soviet Ukraine, where fortunes are made overnight on the wrong side of the law while ordinary citizens barely scratch out a living, *A Friend of the Deceased* (Ukraine's entry for Best Foreign Film at this year's Academy Awards) stars the sultry Alexandre Lazarev as Anatoli, a Kiev translator demoralized into near-catatonia by unemployment and the imminent departure of his wife, a qualified philologist making her pile as an advertising executive. The desperate Anatoli hires a hit man to kill him, and when the hit is temporarily aborted, heads for a drunken night on the town, only to find himself trapped in a seedy, anarchic hell run by mobster entrepreneurs. An equable man, and obedient to a fault, Anatoli livens up as he becomes entangled with a variety of kooks—a vivacious hooker, a contract killer who prefers to stay home and fish, a pretty young widow bizarrely linked to Anatoli by her husband's death—who, like him, compromise their fundamental decency daily as they struggle to stay afloat. Ukrainian director Vyacheslav Krishtofovich, who made the charming 1991 film *Adam's Rib*, about three generations of Soviet women living in a tiny apartment, brings the same ruefully comic edge to this understated drama of a world bustling with new wealth and opportunities, yet jeopardized by near-total normative collapse. "Friendship disappeared with our glorious Soviet past," sighs Anatoli's old comrade and benefactor, at once sardonic and wistful. "Now there's no friendship—only business relationships."



A comedy of errors

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Ella Taylor is a film critic for LA Weekly.

V. KRISTOFOVICH

PAUL CHEDLOW

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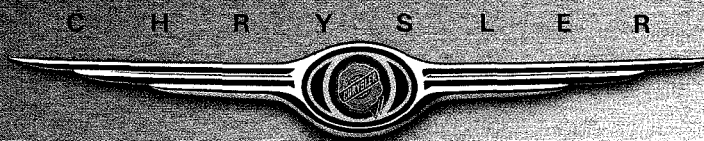
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E N G I N E E R E D T O B E G R E A T C A R S

Popular Music and Jazz

BY BOB BLUMENTHAL AND CHARLES M. YOUNG

BLUES AND ROOTS

Just as new writers are advised to hook the reader on the first page, new bands pretty much have to put the best song near the beginning. Older bands have the luxury of ordering their songs according to a governing aesthetic. Veterans of Led Zeppelin, Jimmy Page and Robert Plant can record anything they want in any order they want and expect a full and careful listening. Even so, it's odd to hear an album that delivers its five least interesting songs first and then catches fire on the sixth song and sustains the burn



through the twelfth and final cut. On *Walking into Clarksdale* (Atlantic), Page & Plant, as they are billed, do exactly that and then get possessed by the spirit of Robert Johnson, who came from Clarksdale, and do some of their most inspired work since the seventies. Influenced by Middle Eastern music and the blues, Page & Plant play a unique and eerie hybrid. They used to call their sound "tight but loose" in Led Zeppelin. "Hot but chilling" might be more accurate now. No one in rock-and-roll has ever moaned and wailed like Plant, and he has been most inspired when Page has given him great riffs to moan and wail around. They need each other, and for seven songs here they actually find each other. By today's industry standard, their battling average would put them in contention for a title. The rhythm section of Charlie Jones on bass and Michael Lee on drums hits hard enough to . . . well, nobody's going to forget John Paul Jones and John Bonham in their prime. Let's just say the new boys hold their own, and that's enough. —C.M.Y.

Bob Blumenthal is a jazz critic for The Boston Globe. Charles M. Young reviews popular music for Playboy, Musician, and other publications.

GROOVIN' DOWN AT SCO'S A GO GO

The guitarist John Scofield's jazz combines populism and iconoclasm. A member of the 1970s generation, weaned on fusion before bebop, he fills his music with hooks and raunchy blues echoes that always turn unexpected corners. Such diversity was perfect for the Miles Davis band, which featured Scofield in the early 1980s, and has been refined in a series of his own albums that tacks from dance-friendly rhythms on the New Orleans paeon *Flat Out* (Gramavision) and funk summitry with the saxophone innovator Eddie Harris on *Hand Jive* (Blue Note) to a combustible early-nineties quartet with Joe Lovano and the chamber-music mystique of last year's all-acoustic *Quiet*



(Verve). *A Go Go* (Verve) brings Scofield back to his basic rhythms and surrounds his maverick guitar lines with the edgy alternative grooves of Medeski Martin and Wood. Because MMW recently signed a contract with Blue Note, the trio's presence isn't made apparent on the album cover, but it deserves co-billing on a program that Scofield clearly fashioned with his collaborators in mind. A slew of deliberate pop echoes are here, such as the "Mercy, Mercy, Mercy" quote that gets tipped on its side during "Boozer," and a dash of *Twilight Zone* atmospherics on "Kubrick." Primarily, though, *A Go Go* delivers headshaking adventures, like "Hottentot," that sound determined to take jazz back to its dance-hall roots. —B.B.

LOVE IN THE TIME OF DECADENCE

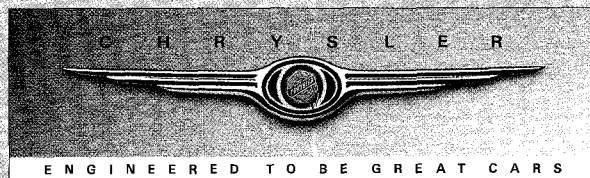
Bassist for the late and much lamented Shockabilly and Bongwater, producer of a zillion semi-underground phenomena, ranging from Galaxie 500 to Butthole Surfers to Penn Jillette (of Penn & Teller), Kramer has one of the coolest résumés a musician could hope for. On his third solo album, *Songs From the Pink Death* (Knitting Factory Records), he brings his considerable production skills to bear on making his own weirdness—as opposed to somebody else's—listenable. And it's very listenable. The tone is mournful but somehow tran-



From the underground, Kramer

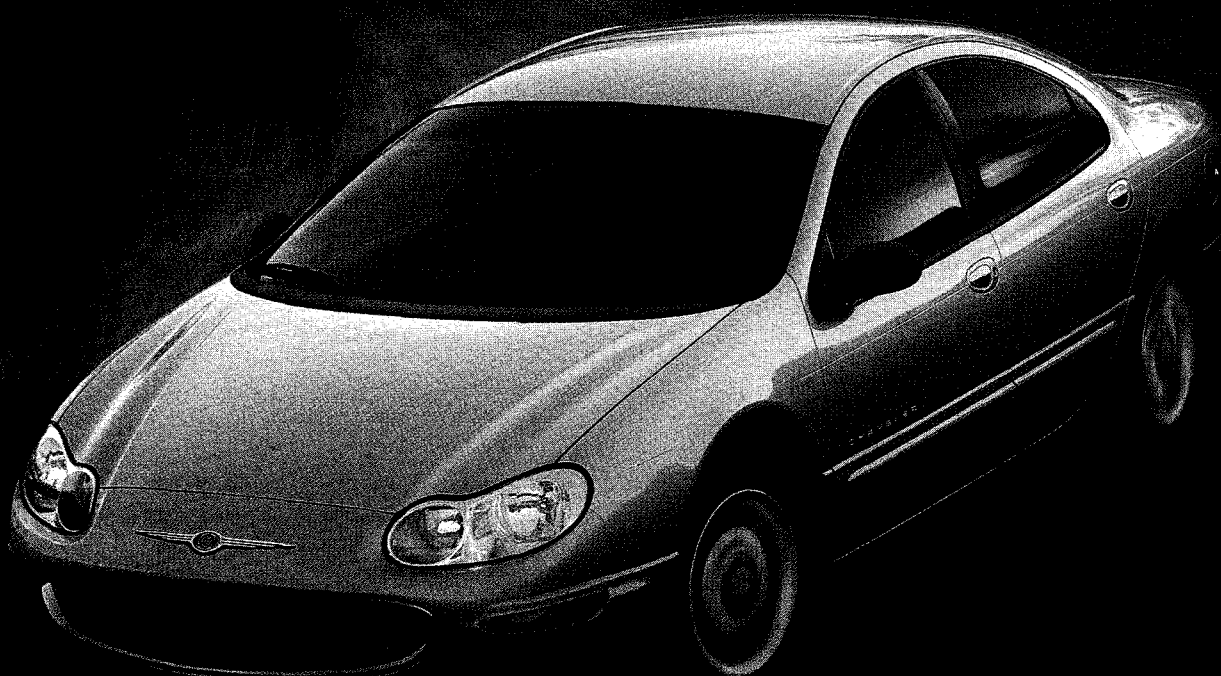
scendently surreal. The guitars and drums establish a hypnotic, dirgelike drone, while the euphoniously chanted lyrics search for just the right image of creeping horror to accompany the quest for love in decadent times. "It never stops being absurd," goes the chorus in "It Never Stops Being Absurd," and indeed, it never does. But however overpowering the absurdity, however tempting the sin of self-pity, Kramer doesn't give up, which keeps the album dancing on the edge of nihilism and despair but not falling in, thus creating an aura of existential heroism. On the final cut he declares the secret of life: "It's alright if she don't love you right." For anyone stuck in a dark hole with an unruly attachment to a bad love affair, Kramer is throwing a rope back to life. —C.M.Y.

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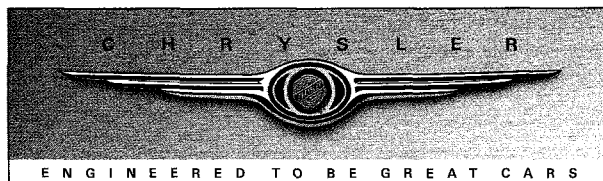
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(Continued from page 30)

For those youths that spoke Spanish at home, English speaking ability was related to their success in school. . . . The status dropout rate for young Hispanics reported to speak English 'well' or 'very well' was . . . 19.2 percent, a rate similar to the 17.5 percent status dropout rate observed for enrolled Hispanic youths that spoke only English at home.

In the past ten years several national surveys of the parents of limited-English schoolchildren have shown that a large majority consider learning English and having other subjects taught in English to be of much greater importance than receiving instruction in the native language or about the native culture. In 1988 the Educational Testing Service conducted a national Parent Preference Study among 2,900 Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, and Asian parents with children in U.S. public schools. Although most of the parents said they wanted special help for their children in learning English and other subjects, they differed on whether their children should be taught in their native languages. Asian parents were the most heavily opposed to the use of native languages in the schools. Among Latino groups, the Puerto Rican parents were

In the most recent national survey of Latino parents, published by the Center for Equal Opportunity, in Washington, D.C., 600 Latino parents of school-age children were interviewed (in Spanish or English) in five U.S. cities—Houston, Los Angeles, Miami, New York, and San Antonio. A strong majority favored learning English as the first order of business for their children, considering it more important than learning other subjects, and much more important than reading and writing in Spanish.

HAVING begun quietly in the 1980s and gained momentum in the 1990s, Latino opposition to native-language teaching programs is now publicly apparent. Two actions by communities of Latino parents demonstrate this turn of events.

A hundred and fifty parents with children in Brooklyn public schools filed a lawsuit in September of 1995, charging that because their children routinely remained segregated in bilingual programs in excess of three years, and in some cases in excess of six years, contrary to section 3204 (2) of the State Education Law, these children were not receiving adequate instruction in English, "the crucial skill that leads to equal opportunity in schooling, jobs, and public life in the United States."

New York State law limits participation in a bilingual program to three years, but an extension can be granted for up to three years more if an individual review of the student's progress seems to warrant it. And here is the nub of the lawsuit: thousands of students are routinely kept in native-language classrooms for six years or longer without even the pretense of individual progress reviews.

Unfortunately, even with the help of a strong champion of their cause, Sister Kathy Maire, and the pro bono services of a prestigious New York law firm, Paul, Weiss, Rifkind, Wharton & Garrison, the parents lost their case. Under New York law these parents in fact have the right not to enroll their children in bilingual classes, or to remove them from bilingual classes, but in practice pressure from school personnel is almost impossible to overcome. Teachers and principals tell parents that their children will fail in English-language classrooms. They play on ethnic pride, asserting that children of a Latino background need to be taught

in Spanish to improve their self-esteem.

In May of last year the Court of Appeals of the State of New York ruled that there could be no further appeals. But the publicity attracted by the case may encourage other Latino parents to take action on behalf of their children. And one concrete improvement has already occurred: the New York City Board of Education announced an end in 1996 to the automatic testing for English-language skills that children with Spanish surnames had undergone when they started school.

On the other coast an equally irate group of Latino parents moved against the Ninth Street School in Los Angeles. Seventy families of mostly Mexican garment workers planned the protest through Las Familias del Pueblo, a community organization that provides after-school child care. Typical of the protesters are Selena and Carlos (I have changed their names, because they are undocumented immigrants), who left the poverty of a rural Mexican village in 1985 to come to work in Los Angeles. Their children were born in Los Angeles, but the school insisted that they not be taught in English until they had learned to read and write in Spanish, by the fourth or fifth grade. The parents complained to the school for years that children who lived in Spanish-speaking homes and neighborhoods needed to study in English in the primary grades, when children find it easier to learn a language than they will later on.

Persistent stonewalling by administrators finally moved the parents to keep their children out of school for nearly two weeks in February of 1996, a boycott that made national news. The parents demanded that their children be placed in English-language classes, a demand that has since been met. The school administrators waited too long to make this change: the previous spring only six students (about one percent of enrollment) had been deemed sufficiently fluent in English to "graduate" to regular classrooms in the next school year.

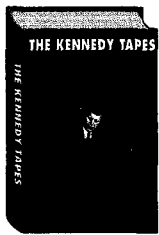
In the early 1970s almost all the students in bilingual classes spoke Spanish. Today, of the three million limited-English students in U.S. public schools, more than 70 percent speak Spanish at home; the rest speak any of 327 other languages. California alone enrolls 1.4 million limited-English children in its

Research reveals almost no justification for teaching children in languages other than English.

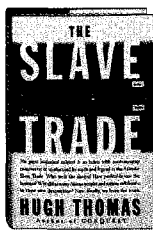
most in favor, the Mexicans somewhat less, and the Cubans least of all. A large majority of the parents felt that it is the family's duty, not the school's, to teach children about the history and traditions of their ancestors. When Mexican parents were asked if they wanted the school to teach reading and writing in Spanish and English, 70 percent answered yes. But when they were asked if they wanted Spanish taught in school if it meant less time for teaching English, only 12 percent were in favor.

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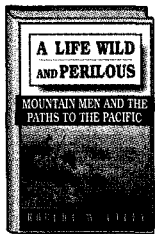
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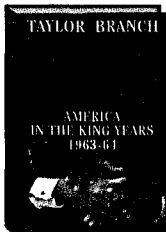
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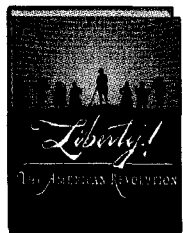
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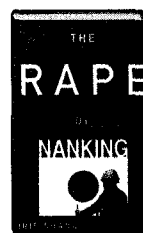
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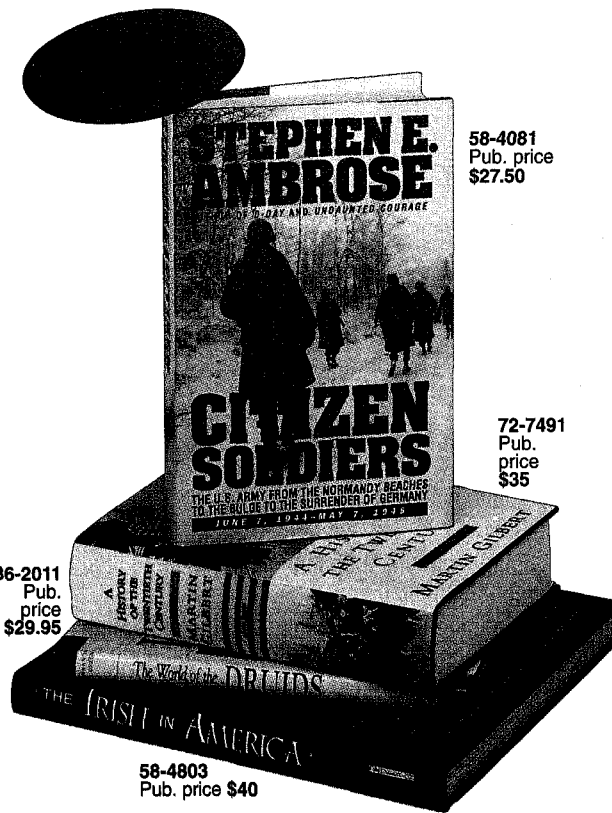
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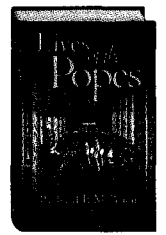
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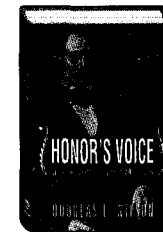
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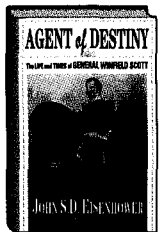
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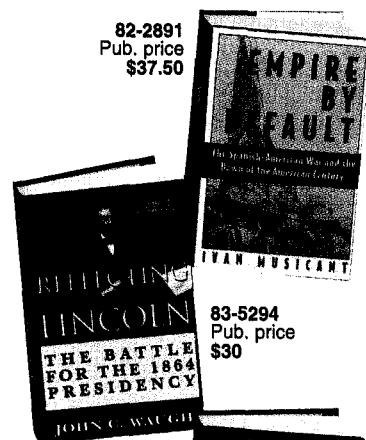
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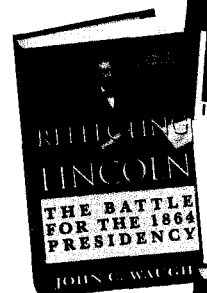
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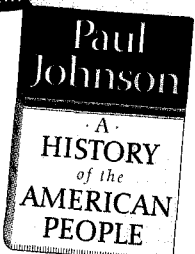
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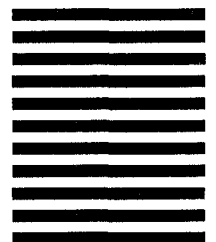
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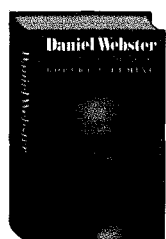
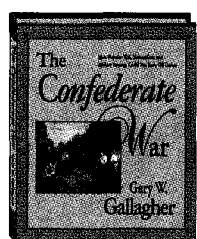
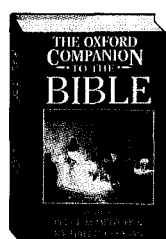
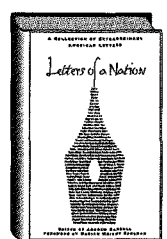
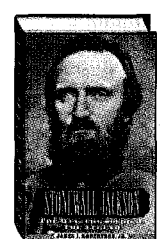
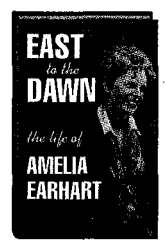
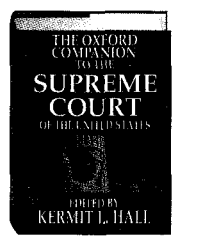
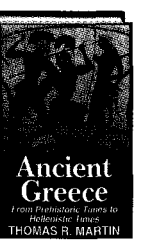
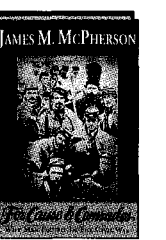
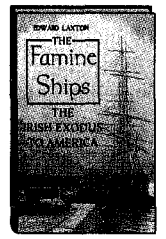
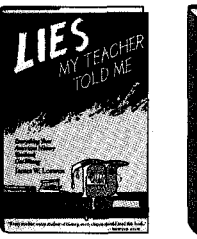
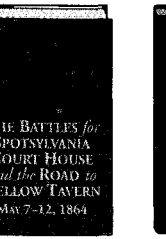
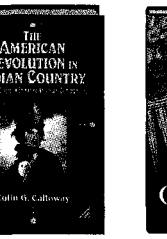
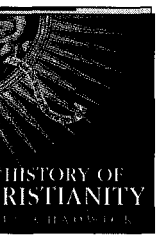
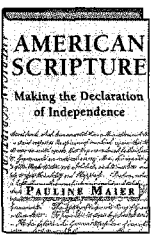
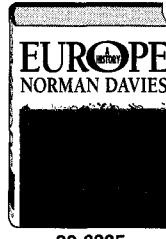
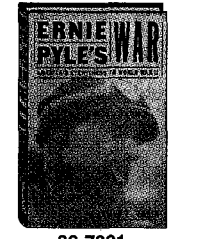
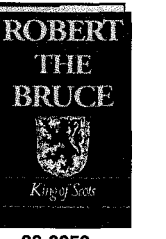
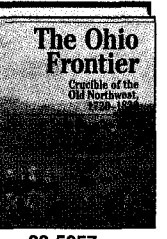
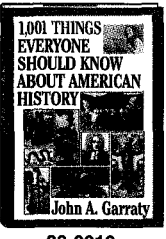
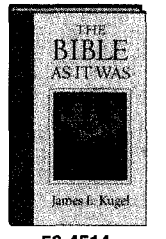
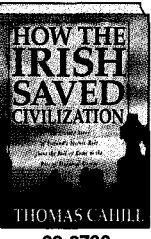
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schools—one of every four students in the state. According to the 1990 U.S. census, 70 percent of limited-English students are concentrated in California, Florida, Illinois, New Jersey, New York, and Texas.

CONTROVERSY over native-language education is at the boil in California. In our most multicultural state, where minorities now constitute 46 percent of the population, a revolution is brewing. In 1987 the California legislature failed to reauthorize the Bilingual-Bicultural Education Act, allowing it to expire. However, the California Department of Education immediately notified all school districts that even without the state law the same requirements would be enforced and bilingual programs continued. In July of 1995 the state Board of Education announced two major policy changes: the “preference” for native-language programs would henceforth be revoked and school districts would be given as much flexibility as possible in choosing their own programs; and school districts were ordered to be more diligent in recording evidence of student achievement than in describing the teaching methods used.

Yet in two years only four school districts have succeeded in obtaining waivers from the department, permitting them to initiate English-language programs for limited-English students. Why should schools have to seek waivers when no state or federal law, no court decision, no state policy, bars them from teaching in English? The most important case to date is that of the Orange Unified School District, with 7,000 limited-English students.

Orange Unified applied in early May of last year for permission to focus on English-language teaching in kindergarten through sixth grade while using a small amount of Spanish. The Department of Education strongly opposed the district, as did the California Association for Bilingual Education, California Rural Legal Assistance, and the organization Multicultural Education, Training, and Advocacy (META). Local Latino activists publicly criticized the district’s change of plan, and some bilingual teachers resigned.

Nevertheless, the Board of Education last July granted Orange permission to try an English-language program for one year. A lawsuit was filed, and a temporary restraining order granted. But last Sep-

tember, U.S. District Court Judge William B. Shubb lifted the restraining order. In his seventeen-page decision the judge wrote, “The court will not second-guess the educational policy choices made by educational authorities.” And he added a ruling with much broader application:

It is clear that “appropriate action” does not require “bilingual education.”

... The alleged difference between two sound LEP [Limited-English Proficient] educational theories—ESL [English as a Second Language] and bilingual instruction—is inadequate to demonstrate irreparable harm.

The federal court ruling allowed Orange to proceed with its English-language program. But the case was returned to Sacramento County Superior Court, where Judge Ronald B. Robie ruled that nothing in California state law requires primary-language instruction, and therefore no waiver is needed for a district to provide an English-language program; and that federal law permits educational programs not to include native-language instruction. Soon after Robie’s ruling the Board of Education rescinded the policy that schools must obtain waivers in order to eliminate bilingual programs. Although the court decision may be appealed, these two actions signal a victory for Orange Unified and have implications for other California districts as well. The legal battle has already cost the Orange district \$300,000, which no doubt would have been better spent on students. It is estimated that the new program will cost an additional \$60,000 the first year, but the superintendent of Orange Unified schools, Robert French, says, “We’re not doing this to save money. We’re doing this to save kids.”

Ron Unz, a Silicon Valley entrepreneur, has long been concerned about the California education system’s failures, especially as they affect its 1.4 million limited-English students. He has decided to put his time, energy, and money into an initiative—“English for the Children”—meant to give all California voters a say on the language of public education. If the initiative passes, in elections to be held on June 2, it will give “preference” to English-language programs for immigrant children, reduce the length of time children may remain in special programs, and make the state spend \$50 million a year to teach English to adults. Bilingual

programs will be allowed only in localities where parents actually request native-language teaching for their children.

Last November, Unz and the co-chairman of the drive, Gloria Matta Tuchman, submitted more than 700,000 signatures to put the petition on the California ballot. The drive has the support of several Latino leaders in California, most notably Jaime Escalante, who is its honorary chairman. Escalante is the Los Angeles high school teacher whose success in teaching his Latino students advanced

*Having begun quietly
in the 1980s, Latino
opposition to bilingual
education has become
publicly apparent.*

calculus gained him national fame in the film *Stand and Deliver*.

Though some opponents characterize the petition as “anti-immigrant,” Unz and Matta Tuchman have strong pro-immigrant credentials. In 1994 Unz ran against the incumbent Pete Wilson in the Republican primary for governor and forcefully opposed the referendum to deny schooling and health benefits to illegal immigrants—a referendum that passed with Wilson’s support. Matta Tuchman is a recognized Latina advocate for improved schooling for all immigrant children, but especially Spanish-speakers. The measure is likely to pass, some believe with strong ethnic support. A *Los Angeles Times* poll last October found Latino voters backing the initiative by 84 percent, and Anglos by 80 percent. A more recent survey showed a reduced amount of support—66 percent of respondents, and 46 percent of Latinos, in favor. But whether or not the initiative passes, bilingual education has had a sufficient trial period to be pronounced a failure. It is time finally to welcome immigrant children into our society by adding to the language they already know a full degree of competency in the common language of their new country—to give these children the very best educational opportunity for inclusion. ☛



Listening to St. John's Wort

*Medical science meets the
"natural Prozac"*

SINCE the American debut of Prozac, in 1988, if we listen to Peter Kramer, the author of the best-selling *Listening to Prozac*, we have experienced a change in our understanding of what happens when we treat psychiatric illness. One aspect of that change is the notion that psychical benefit need not have much of a downside. Even the reversible side effects (drowsiness, constipation) of older drugs

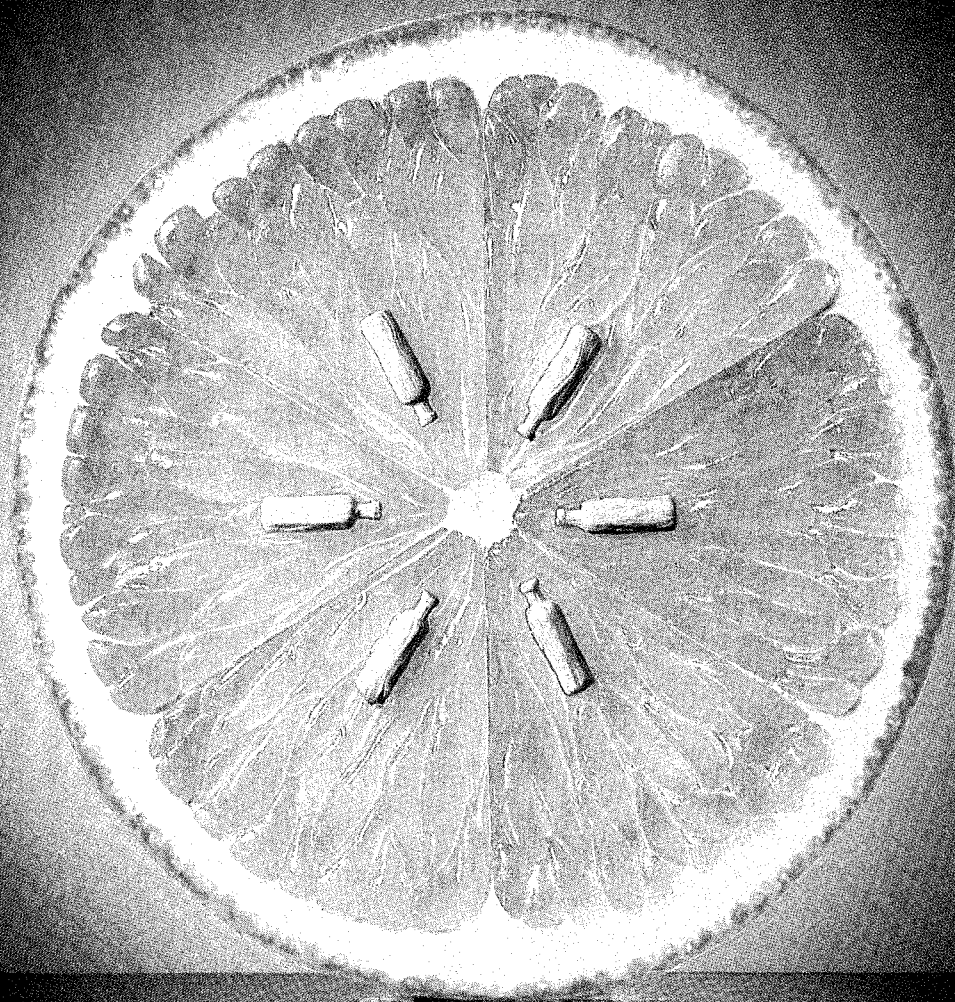
by Edison Miyawaki

could put off ambulatory depressives seeking relief. But Prozac is a kinder, gentler antidepressant than those that came before it. Furthermore, Prozac works. And its effects go beyond the relief of depression. The Kramerian psychiatrist tells his patients that the drug will relieve their symptoms but adds, "I must warn you, you may feel more contented." Prozac appears to have had an effect on the zeitgeist, too: "We

will come to discover," Kramer says, "that modern psychopharmacology has become, like Freud in his day, a whole climate of opinion under which we conduct our different lives." The thinly veiled indictment in his conclusion is that psychopharmacology, the study of drugs that influence mind and mood, is less than science, more like predicting the weather. In post-Prozac 1998 one wonders how the psychopharmacological climate will change with the advent of the latest, rather unlikely antidepressant: *Hypericum perforatum*, an herb known as St. John's wort ("wort" is Old English for "plant").

According to Jonathan Zuess's *The Natural Prozac Program: How to Use St. John's Wort, the Antidepressant Herb* (1997), there is nothing particularly new about *H. perforatum*. Solomon's Song of Songs refers to it as the Rose of Sharon, and the physician Paracelsus (1493–1541) recorded its use for nervousness, skin wounds, and abdominal pain after listening to "old wives, gypsies, sorcerers . . . and such outlaws" while wandering Europe and the Middle East in search of unconventional treatments. *H. perforatum* has a yellow five-petaled flower with numerous stamens which typically blooms on or about June 24, Saint John's birthday; legend has it that the plant first grew from the blood that fell at Saint John's beheading. It grows abundantly near the Klamath River, in California, and is thus sometimes called Klamath weed. Like a weed, it is common in sunny areas and dry soils throughout the world. Goats eat it; cattle demur. Zuess reports that "medical researchers have been astonished to discover that even though St. John's wort works as well as antidepressant drugs like Prozac and Tofranil [an older antidepressant, also known as imipramine], it has only a fraction of the number of side effects that they do."

H. perforatum's flower buds exude a burgundy-colored oil when soaked in alcohol, vaguely reminiscent, one supposes, of Saint John's blood. This tincture contains high concentrations of its putatively active chemical, hypericin. Dried extracts from harvested buds, blooms, leaves, and stems contain variable per-



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centages of hypericin. The *British Medical Journal (BMJ)* recently published an overview of clinical trials involving 1,757 patients. In those trials daily doses of extract given for "mild or moderately severe" depression have run 350–900 milligrams; total hypericin dose has varied from 0.4 to 2.7 mg a day. There is no specific recommendation as to how best to take it; Zuess suggests that it be taken at least twice a day, and says that it may be preferable to take it with meals, to minimize stomach upset, though that is unlikely to occur. The duration of treatment in trials has generally been at least four weeks, so relief of symptoms is possible but not anticipated in less time.

HYPERICUM preparations are marketed in the United States as dietary supplements. They cannot legally be labeled as effective against any specific disease, despite the 1994 passage of the Dietary Supplement Health and Education Act (DSHEA), which sought to liberalize the dissemination of information about natural products. Federal regulations have been slow to respond to the therapeutic claims made for St. John's wort. To date, clinical and research experience come largely from Germany, where the herb is approved for the treatment of depression and anxiety. In 1994, according to a *BMJ* editorial, German physicians prescribed 66 million daily doses of *Hypericum* preparations for psychological complaints. American physicians have traditionally been less accepting of herbal treatments than German physicians, but the American public appears to have its own opinion: the medicinal use of botanicals is increasing in the United States. The U.S. market in 1995 was approximately one third the size of Europe's, but some estimate that it is growing by 15 percent a year. DSHEA included an estimate that some 600 dietary-supplement manufacturers in the United States produce some 4,000 products with annual sales of \$4 billion.

Animals have experienced skin reactions to light (even fatal sunburns) after ingesting large quantities of St. John's wort. Side effects in human beings are, reportedly, infrequent (stomach upset in 0.6 percent, allergic reactions in 0.5 percent, fatigue in 0.4 percent), and serious adverse events (such as reactions to sunlight or marked changes in blood pres-

sure) extremely rare, but these data were collected in "open" rather than "blinded" (neither doctor nor patient knowing what treatment is being used) and controlled fashion. Peter de Smet, a Dutch clinical pharmacologist and "herbal pharmacopidemiologist," and a co-author of the *BMJ* editorial, has warned, however, that one serious adverse reaction in 10,000 users may be considered unacceptable in "official medicine" if there is no clear therapeutic need for the drug in question.

St. John's wort holds promise of therapeutic merit, but in April of last year the influential newsletter *Biological Therapies in Psychiatry* recommended against its use in the absence of large clinical trials. Among the twenty-three studies in the *BMJ* overview, patients with mild or moderately severe depressive disorders fared significantly better with St. John's wort than with placebos in fifteen studies, with a response rate of 55 percent (as against 22 percent). In eight studies comparing St. John's wort with standard antidepressants, including imipramine at conservative doses, efficacy was slightly higher (64 percent, as against 58 percent). The dropout rate—a reflection of drug toxicity that may limit treatment—was lower among those using St. John's wort than among those using standard antidepressants, and lower even than among those who received placebos, suggesting that the paucity of side effects may be *H. perforatum*'s greatest attraction. (Its overall frequency of any side effects was 20 percent, as compared with 53 percent for standard antidepressants in blinded studies.)

The newsletter *Biological Therapies in Psychiatry* seems harsh in its judgment on the herb, given the preliminary evidence suggesting its efficacy. "There is a lack of sufficient data on safety (particularly long-term), efficacy, potential interactions, and product purity of products sold as nutritional supplements rather than as drugs, such as St. John's wort," the newsletter said. The problem of impurity is especially germane to herbal combinations. A 1981 British report attributed liver damage to a mistletoe preparation that included skullcap (*Scutellaria lateriflora*). By the late 1980s, after additional experience with *Scutellaria* species had surfaced, the skullcap (famous as an eighteenth-century treatment for canine rabies), rather than the mistle-

toe, was deemed to have been the likely culprit. Even herbal "monopreparations" are not exactly pure: in *H. perforatum* extracts some ten chemicals may play a role in the therapeutic effect, though hypericin is thought to be principally responsible. But how St. John's wort works chemically to mitigate depression is unclear, a point that Michael Jenike, of the Harvard Medical School, makes in a generally favorable preface to a section dedicated to the herb in the *Journal of Geriatric Psychiatry and Neurology*.

No well-informed clinician would disparage medicinal plants in general (a short list of well-established pharmaceuticals that derive from plants would include digitalis, morphine, reserpine, pilocarpine, and curare), but there is skepticism in the United States about the comparatively liberal use of them in Europe. Though the observation smacks of scientific xenophobia, the German experience with St. John's wort is not the English-speaking experience, and until recently the English-speaking world had no experience. The authors of the *BMJ* review observed that had they restricted their search for published studies to those in English, not a single clinical trial of St. John's wort would have been found as of 1994. The journals in which one might find clinical research on herbal remedies (for example, *Phytomedicine*, which in 1995 published what was probably the first English-language review of St. John's wort as an antidepressant) are rare in medical-school libraries.

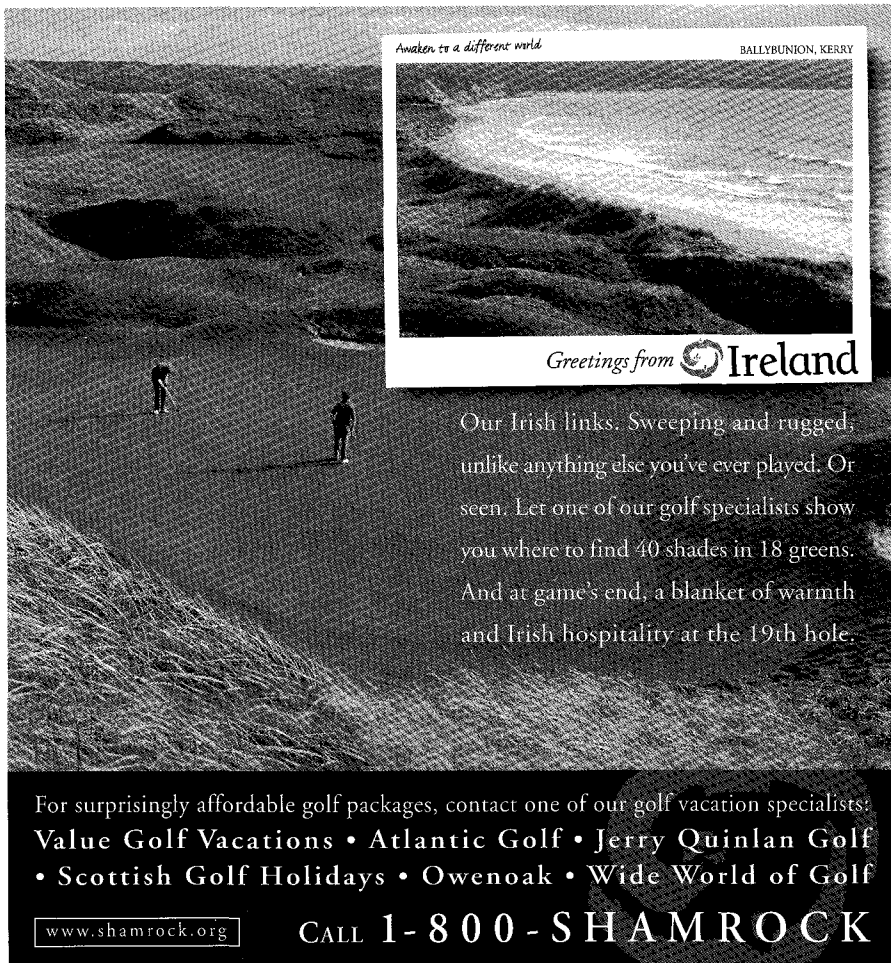
Jonathan Zuess describes St. John's wort as the "most-used antidepressant in the history of humanity" and "truly a healer of both the body and the mind." But one ought to proceed with caution. The characterization of it as "the natural Prozac" is not, alas, supported by any published clinical research comparing the two substances, although the National Institute of Mental Health (including the Offices of Alternative Medicine and Dietary Supplements) is currently embarking on a comparison of St. John's wort and the Prozac-like drug Zoloft.

LIKE Prozac, St. John's wort promises much, and perhaps also like Prozac, it has effects that go beyond countering depression. Those familiar with the range of Prozac's influence (on, as Kramer has posited, "affect tolerance,

autonomy and coercion, cultural expectations, evolutionary fitness, transcendence”) may be unsurprised to find a similar breadth of powers attributed to St. John’s wort. The hope, of course, is that someday we will find an antidepressant of great power with little or no downside—but then the question will be, What are we treating? “Mild to moderately severe depression”—the proper province of Prozac and, the available data suggest, of St. John’s wort—has come to mean many things. Assuming that I make a decision to take an antidepressant, am I clear about what it is specifically that I am trying to assuage in my life?

Since the vast majority of studies quoted in the recent literature on *H. perforatum* measure its effects according to changes in symptoms that appear on a standard clinical rating scale for depression, I applied the scale to myself, a busy clinician and researcher. I answered affirmatively to thirteen of its seventeen items, each of which is to be graded in terms of severity. Of those thirteen, two relate to problems with sleep, two to guilt and mood, three to anxiety, four to weight loss and bodily symptoms (especially muscle aches), and one to feelings of fatigue or incapacity in work and hobbies. If I explain that many of my symptoms stem from being an anxious, guilty insomniac with neck pain, I have to rate myself higher on the last remaining item, which questions my insight into my problem. Attributing depressive symptoms to the climate, a virus, or overwork is not the same as, and perhaps more pathological than, admitting that I am depressed, according to this scale. My total score is 16, out of a maximum of 52; the mean rating for patients enrolled in sixteen recent *H. perforatum* studies was comparable, at 20. But the point is that “depression” as measured by this yardstick is no motivation to seek out my psychopharmacological options. I would feel much the same need, perhaps even more acutely, if I scored a mere 3 owing to one symptom alone: “a decrease in productivity.”

I do not know quite how I will fare with St. John’s wort. With little risk, what harm in experimentation? I can explore what effect the drug has, which is the next best thing to understanding what it is that makes me take it. ☘



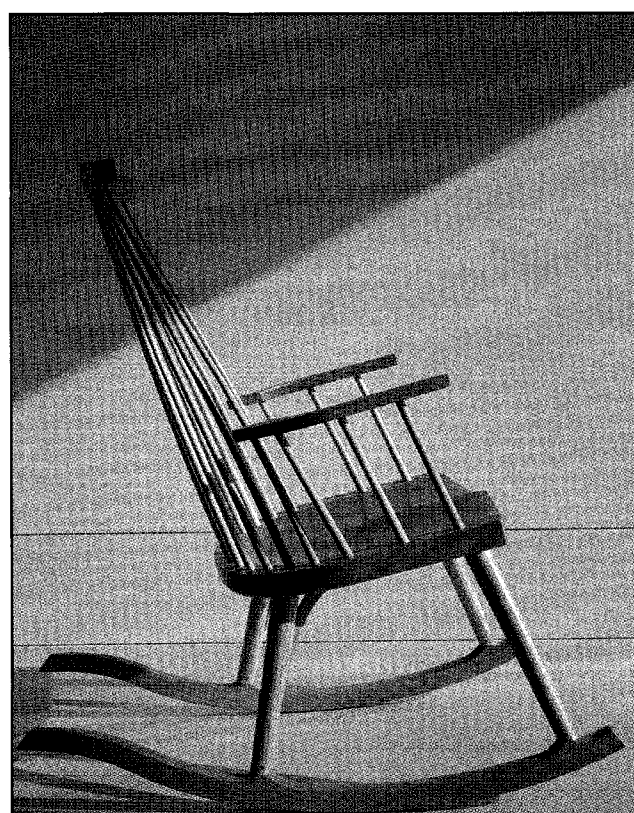
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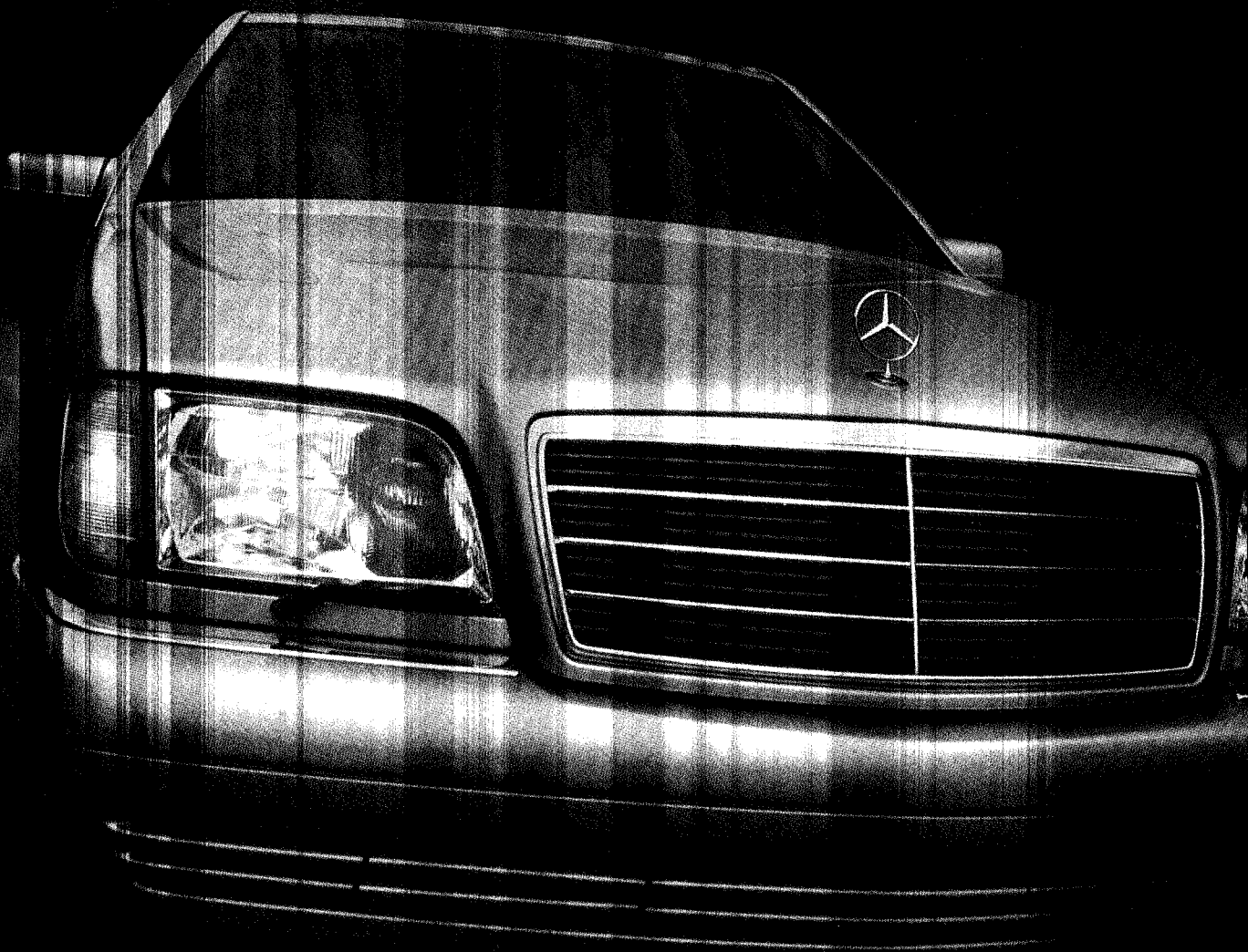
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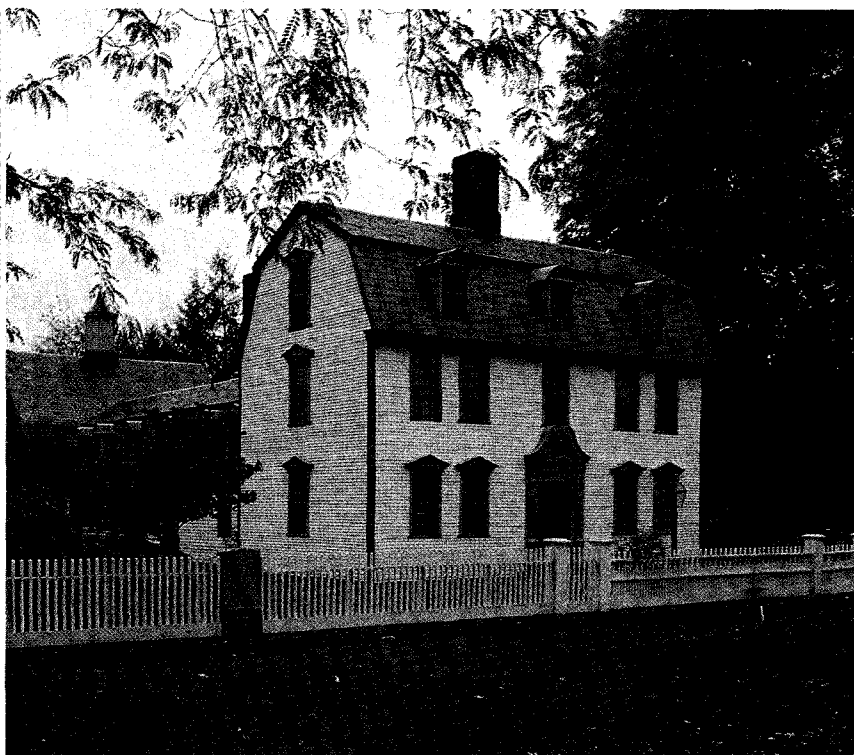
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*The Dwight House, Deerfield*

New England Places

The Atlantic has been headquartered in New England for 140 years, so the staff members and contributing editors have had plenty of time to explore it. Here are some of our favorite spots

History, Living and Dead

To see New England in all its shimmering purity, prismatic splendor, and aristocratic bearing, go to Deerfield, in north-central Massachusetts. With its famous and expensive prep school, Deerfield Academy; its white eighteenth-century frame houses; and fourteen little museums that are advertised by the least obtrusive of signs and run by soft-spoken and prosperous-looking elderly women, this austere New England town screams "good taste" and whispers "money." Indeed, I have found that most people who know about Deerfield know

about it through the prep school, meaning that they have some tie to those who can spend \$22,000 a year on a high school education.

But my favorite place in Deerfield is the cemetery, with graves dating back to the late 1600s, before the Founding Fathers were born, when Deerfield was the northwestern outpost of settlement in New England. The victims of a particularly gruesome Indian massacre, in 1704, are buried in mass graves—big mounds, actually. In no other spot in the United States have I felt such an organic, oppressive sense of history as alongside these horrible mounds, whose silent screams create a link with the past that is

rare on such a newly settled continent.

Forget Williamsburg and other reconstructed old towns—they're gentle theme parks. Deerfield is the genuine article. It could almost belong to Europe, with its record of atrocities and suggestion of class distinctions. Here the process of American culture's separation from its European antecedents becomes palpable. A real travel experience should make the traveler a bit uneasy. Deerfield does that to me.

—ROBERT D. KAPLAN

Consumerism 101

I MAY be the only person who wishes he'd gone to Harvard not for the academics but for the shopping. I don't mean bargain hunting in Harvard Square boutiques. A ritual of my trips to Boston is to spend Saturday afternoon in Cambridge with my friend Milo Miles, the pop-music critic, looking for used books and records—or sometimes just looking at them. Exhibited on the wall of Stereo Jack's, a jazz specialty store in Porter Square, on my last visit there, for example (and priced well beyond my means), was an original pressing of Cecil Taylor's 1973 LP *Indent*, on Taylor's own label—an item so rare it might as well have been one of a kind.

On Milo's recommendation, I stopped in at the bookstore Wordsworth recently to buy a copy of *Air Guitar*, a collection of essays on popular culture by the art critic Dave Hickey. In his introduction (or "overture," as he calls it) Hickey defends the buying and selling of art by arguing that academics—not shopkeepers or consumers—are the ones whose relationship to art tends to be proprietary. For Hickey, "little stores" are places where ideas and information are freely exchanged, along with merchandise; their staff members are eager to answer your questions not just to close a sale but because they love talking about what they're selling.

This perfectly describes the atmosphere in such shops as Stereo Jack's, Cheapo's (an R&B and oldies store in Central Square), and Kate's Mystery Books (as

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JOHN MULDOON

The Hill-Stead Museum

genteel an outlet for pulp fiction as one could ever imagine). There are stores like this in every city, usually clustered in former bohemian enclaves that are under siege by Starbuck's, The Gap, Tower Records, and teenagers disenchanted with suburban malls. The difference in Cambridge is the shadow cast by a great university, which virtually guarantees a more esoteric selection of goods, and also prevents a middle-aged popular-culture obsessive like myself from feeling out of place. The young hordes around Harvard Square probably mistake me for a professor, unless they think I'm a cop.

—FRANCIS DAVIS

A Backward Glance

I CAN'T imagine why Merchant and Ivory, or other filmmakers mining the Gilded Age, haven't discovered the Hill-Stead Museum, whose six white columns dominate a hilltop in the studied New England perfection of Farmington, Connecticut. It's a dream of an Edwardian house—what Edith Wharton would have built if she'd had the money. (Her own estate, The Mount, in Lenox,



COURTESY OF HILL-STEAD MUSEUM

Massachusetts, is far more modest.) Wharton's friend Henry James visited Hill-Stead, and called the house "an exquisite palace of peace, and light and harmony."

Any visitor is struck by the serenity of the rambling

white Colonial Revival house—and by the small but extraordinary collection of Impressionist paintings assembled by Alfred Atmore Pope, who made a fortune in iron. Pope chose genteel Farmington as the site for his retirement house to please his daughter and only child, Theodate, who had been a student at Miss Porter's School there.

The contents were mostly bought by Pope, but the house and its notable gardens were shaped by his daughter. As a young woman, Theodate changed her name (to her grandmother's) from the prosaic Effie she had been christened, because it seemed more serious. She was a suffragette, one of the country's first successful female architects, and a survivor of the *Lusitania*, on which she was sailing to a meeting of psychics. In what could not have been an easy collaboration, the fledgling architect worked with the gloried firm of McKim, Mead and White to design the

house. Theodate married at forty-nine, three years after her father died, and lived at Hill-Stead until her death, in 1946. Her will stipulated that the house become a museum and that nothing be moved or lent—or labeled.

As a teenager, I spent many hours hanging back on group tours of the house, waiting to be left alone in the drawing rooms to watch the late-afternoon sun hit the two Monet *Haystacks*, hung opposite each other, or to study the Degas jockeys hanging over the dining-room fireplace, or to stare at the red sash that provides almost the only color in Manet's gorgeous *The Guitar Player*, which is a portrait of Victorine Meurent, the model for *Olympia* and *Déjeuner sur l'herbe*. Of course I dreamt of what it would be like to live there, which must be what Theodate Riddle had in mind: by turning the house into a museum she doubtless intended to show the public her own, persuasive definition of the way to live.

—CORBY KUMMER

The Real McCoy

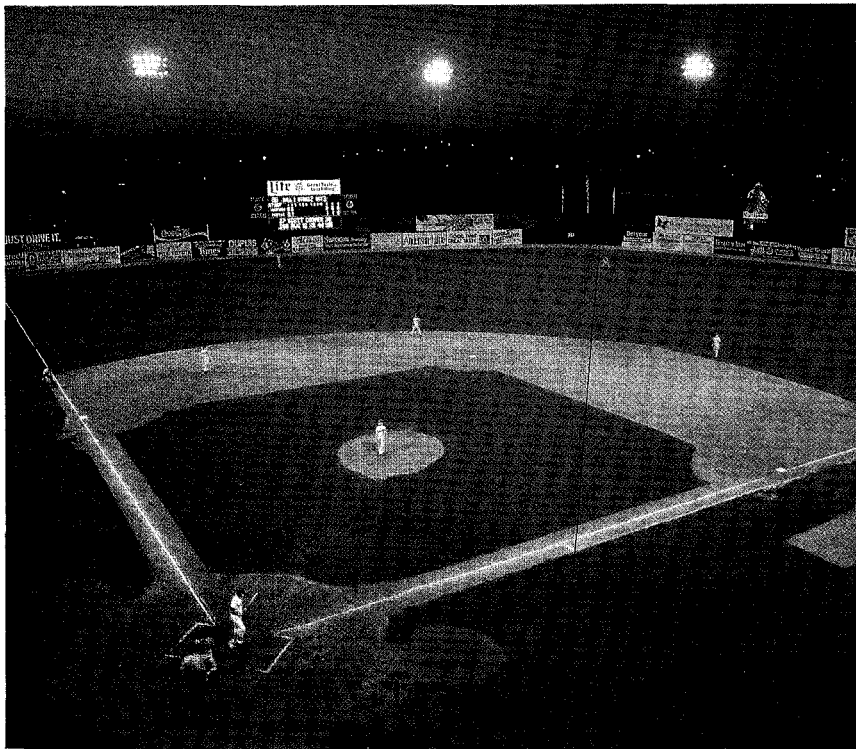
THERE are still a few places left in America where there is honor in provincialism, and one of

them is McCoy Stadium, in the blue-collar town of Pawtucket, Rhode Island—home of the Pawtucket Red Sox, AAA farm team for the Boston Red Sox. At McCoy one is presented with professional sports as they originally were, before television. The ballpark is located in the neighborhood where the fans live, so they can walk there. It is a pleasant but utilitarian place in which the view from the stands is of a factory where Hasbro toys used to be manufactured. Since the PawSox are a minor-league team, by definition they can have no superstars who get all the attention: anytime anybody gets good, off he goes to the BoSox, and usually when anybody well known appears at McCoy, it's because his career is on the rocks.

In many minor-league venues, in baseball and, for that matter, just about every other field of endeavor, there is a palpable feeling of deflation and listlessness in the air. Everybody seems to be wondering what there is to get excited about in this country except the celebrity culture. Not so at McCoy. The place is quite often full (it drew 467,000 fans last season, and if you want to go, you ought to call in



McCoy Stadium, Pawtucket



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advance for tickets), and the idea of being merely a big planet in the Red Sox solar system doesn't seem to trouble anybody (just as Providence doesn't mind being in the orbit of Boston). People want the PawSox to win, but in a relaxed, good-humored way that represents a graceful accommodation to the reality that this is only the minors. They cheer a player when he's sent up, and then welcome him warmly when he's sent back down. They ask the people in the next row to watch their kids while they go to get some fried dough. It's a nice way to spend a summer evening.

—NICHOLAS LEMANN

Sky Watchers

"AMERICA'S Stonehenge," in North Salem, New Hampshire, looks nothing like the circle of monoliths on Salisbury Plain, but resembles it in age and ambiguity. The requirements for enjoying a visit there are simple: a liking for old stones and speculation, the guidebook available at the entrance lodge, a flashlight for peering into niches, and sturdy footgear. The trails around the site are, as trails go, in the boulevard class, but the interior of the main structure has been scraped and sifted down to rough bedrock. That structure cascades down the slope of what was formerly called Mystery Hill, in a complex of vaguely rectangular enclosures incorrectly attributed to an early, presumably lunatic settler named Pattee and to Irish monks on the run from Vikings. Forty years of archaeological investigation, organized by Robert Stone, who acquired the area in 1957, have turned up charcoal carbon-dated to 2000 B.C. and located peripheral boulders marking the sunrise on solstices, equinoxes, and a number of other dates. The place was a Neolithic calendar, and after viewing it all the visitor can sit on a handy hummock and consider what has been learned of its makers.

They were sky watchers and timekeepers. They dressed stone with stone tools, cut a drainage system into the bedrock before building (it still works), and positioned huge boulders precisely where they wanted them. They built walls that have survived 4,000 years of earthquakes, vandalism, and New England winters. But who were they? Where did they come from—or go? Did the clever

acoustic rig deliver oracles, orders, ritual formulas? Did the apparent sacrificial stone drip blood or libations of primordial root beer? The surrounding woods rustle, the birds chirp, crows call, the voices of other visitors drift on the breeze, and the questions remain as unanswerable as what song the Sirens sang. It is a fine place to indulge the imagination, knowing that although one's fancies cannot be proved right, it is unlikely that they will soon be proved wrong.

—PHOEBE-LOU ADAMS

Fine Folk

ALMOST a century ago a little rich girl named Electra Havemeyer bought a cigar-store Indian for \$15 and got one of the servants to haul it home in a wagon. Her cultured, discriminating parents were horrified, but in fact the incident only went to show how strongly their daughter took after them. Passionate art lovers, the Havemeyers would one day help the Metropolitan Museum of Art to make something of itself, bequeathing it nearly 2,000 paintings and objects. Electra, in her turn, would found her own museum—the Shelburne Museum, in Shelburne, Vermont,

The Shelburne Museum



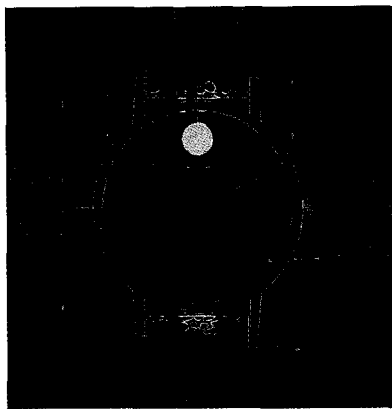
just south of Burlington—to display a collection of what is by now 80,000 items of folk art and such.

Carousel animals and miniature circuses, quilts and dolls, farm tools and doctors' paraphernalia and musical instruments and decoys—

what whimsical or instructive or simply charming category of Americana doesn't the Shelburne Museum have? As the years went by, Electra's ambitions grew bolder and bolder. She elaborated a transportation theme, acquiring carriages and sleighs, a stagecoach inn, a railroad station complete with locomotive and posh private rail car, a lighthouse, and even a huge steamboat that had once plied nearby Lake Champlain. She had entire buildings hauled in: an old schoolhouse, a general store, houses, a sawmill, a meetinghouse, a covered bridge. Even after her death and the death of her husband, James Watson Webb, the museum continued to grow: their children arranged for six rooms from the Webbs' Park Avenue apartment to be reconstructed in precise detail, right down to hanging the paintings, by Rembrandt, Degas, Cassatt, Whistler, Monet, Manet, that a generation before had gone to Electra instead of to the Met.



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Not far from the museum, prettily sited on Lake Champlain, is Shelburne Farms, long ago the estate of Electra's in-laws and now a tourist attraction in its own right. In warm weather it comes alive as a much-beloved hotel, with a thousand acres of grounds perfected by Frederick Law Olmsted.

Newport, Rhode Island, and its stupefyingly over-the-top mansions tell a compelling story of America's robber barons. Shelburne's story dates from that era too, but it's funnier, more welcoming, and more heartwarming.

—BARBARA WALLRAFF

All in Our Heads

NO one location will do. Many times and places have combined to embody my ideal New England scene. It always comes down to an island in summer, perhaps Martha's Vineyard, perhaps Vinalhaven or Mount Desert or elsewhere in Penobscot Bay. I find myself walking, early in the morning, soon after dawn, along a path where the vegetation has closed in and fans over my head. The birds are moving in the branches. I can hear chickadees, song sparrows, yellow-throat warblers, goldfinches. Sunlight filters greenly down through the still-crisp leaves. In the distance surf rumbles. Beneath my feet the soil is moist, dark, and yielding, and the air stings my nostrils with the scent of blossoms and salt.

I hope to walk unhurriedly through these mixed alders and swamp maples and, as I round a turn, emerge into a grove of acacias where the sun can penetrate more easily through the leaves to dry the dew on the white sand that begins to purr beneath my feet. The smell of the acacias, faint but sure, greets me and hints with this sifted and nitrogenized soil that there might once have been a habitation near—a frame house, a well, a flower garden—even though nothing new has been built here for a century or two. A pair of mourning doves flies up, wings whistling faintly. The surf continues to murmur in the distance as I emerge into full sunlight, but no habitation stands nearby. That clinches it: my favorite place no longer exists unimproved in New England. If it did, I would not think of telling you where it lies.

—PETER DAVISON

Footloose

ACADIA National Park, rugged and insular, a glacier-carved pendant hung from the silver coast of Maine, is one of the smallest of America's national parks and at the same time one of the most visited (it ranks No. 7 out of 376)—a combination that to some might seem like fair warning: stay away if you dislike crowds.

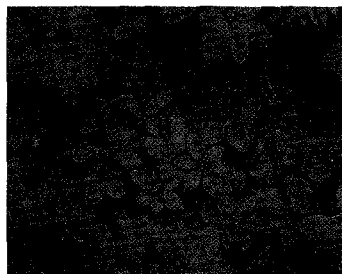
In this case, though, the statistics are deceptive. Yes, you will often find lines of cars on Acadia's loop road and knots of tourists at the service nodes. But most of these visitors remain wheeled and sedentary. Set off up one of the park's dozen or so mountains from any trailhead, and with each foot of elevation the population diminishes exponentially. After fifty yards you will seem to be alone in a landscape of ascending forest that eventually yields to the bare granitic dome crowning every summit. The domes give Acadia's location its name, Mount Desert Island (from the French *monts désert*), and ensure that the views extend unobstructed to all points of the compass. A briny wind blows steadily, and on clement days

a climber can't help turning to face it with eyes closed and arms outstretched—the universal zephyrtropic impulse. In the sheltered lowlands between the mountains lie grassy meadows and stands of birch and small lakes dug and filled by the Ice Age.

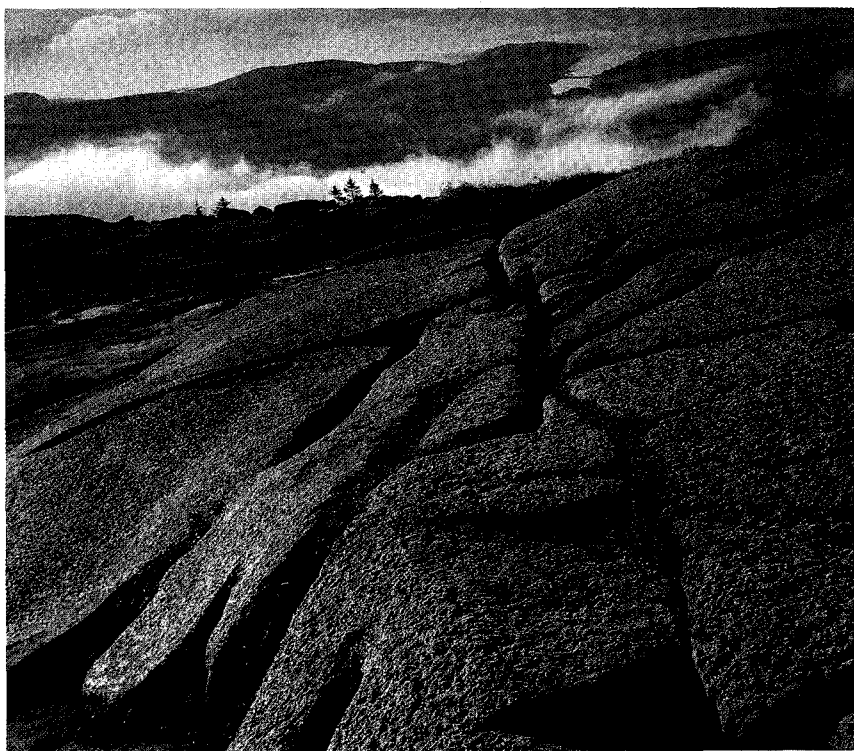
The highest of the mountains is Cadillac (1,530 feet), and it is also the only one with a road to the top, bringing travelers in buses and RVs. Hiking up Cadillac, my family and I know we're near the summit when we encounter the advance guard of those who have ambled down the trails from the snack shop and parking lot—children with ice cream cones, usually. They seem to us like exotic shorebirds, and we seem to ourselves like ocean-going travelers who have at last approached port after a long and dangerous passage. The advance guard greets us, we imagine, with respect and awe as we stride from below with our steady

fast gazes and sturdy boots. We do not tell them that we are creatures much like them, and they do not follow us long enough to see that we, too, eat our ice cream one lick at a time.

—CULLEN MURPHY



Acadia National Park



THE LAB OF LUXURY

The next time you go to the post office, if you see a "Wanted" poster with a picture of a black Labrador retriever on it, he's probably mine.

His name is Walter, and he has a wit, charm and personality that could probably land him his own talk show, should he be so inclined. But he has one character flaw: He's a thief.

Befitting his breed, he's always retrieved with a tireless energy bordering on obsession. But lately his retrieving has gone beyond tennis balls and authorized socks. It's more like Grand Theft—Shoe.

I should have known something was up when two or three copies of the same morning paper would appear on the lawn. I thought the paper carrier was just taking a mulligan. I didn't realize my own dog was swiping them from my now news-deprived neighbors.

He returned from a brief burst of freedom the other day,

triumphantly toting one of those expensive European wooden sandals. I surmised he had stolen it off a neighbor's deck. He beamed like he'd found a Nobel Prize.

I loaded Labrador and his loot into my new Catera, intending to drive through the neighborhood



to find a deck with one shoe, or worse, a neighbor wearing just one. I quickly forgot my mission. The driving was just too much fun.

I had read about all the features in a newspaper ad: 200-horsepower V6 with multi-ram induction, speed-sensitive steering, traction control, on and on. But they didn't mean much until I felt them behind the wheel. My drive

around the block took me way out in the country and back.

It seems odd to pass other luxury cars on two-lane highways when you're not really in a hurry to begin with. Something about Catera makes you do it anyway. Walter smiled the whole way.

As luck would have it, on my way back up my street, I spied a neighbor searching his yard, sporting the other sandal in his hand and a puzzled look.

He was less interested in my explanation than in having a long discussion about my new Catera, repeatedly asking questions about feature after feature while running his hand across the leather seats.

I asked if he'd seen the newspaper ad; he had not. He said his papers kept disappearing from his lawn. Walter and I took the Fifth.

Now, all I need is to find a support group for canine kleptomaniacs. Preferably, one that's some distance from here. I won't mind the drive.



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A Special Moment in History

by BILL McKIBBEN



B The fate of the planet will be determined in the next few decades, through our technological, lifestyle, and population choices

BEWARE of people preaching that we live in special times. People have preached that message before, and those who listened sold their furniture and climbed up on rooftops to await ascension, or built boats to float out the coming flood, or laced up their Nikes and poisoned themselves in some California subdivision. These prophets are the ones with visions of the seven-headed beast, with a taste for the hair shirt and the scourge, with twirling eyes. No, better by far to listen to Ecclesiastes, the original wise preacher, jaded after a thousand messiahs and a thousand revivals.

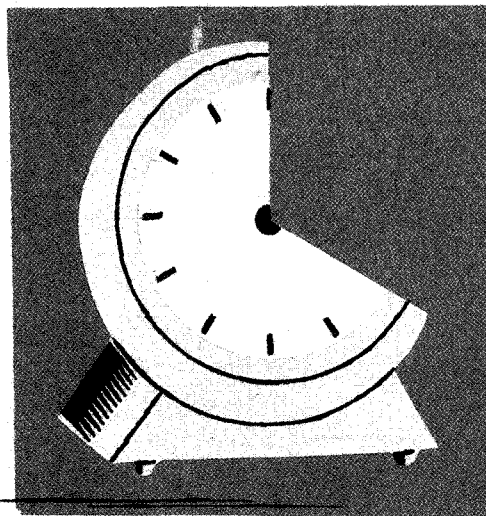
One generation passes away, and another generation comes; but the earth abides forever. . . . That which has been is what will be, that which is done is what will be done, and there is nothing new under the sun. Is there anything of which it may be said, "See, this is new"? It has already been in ancient times before us.

And yet, for all that, we may live in a special time. We may live in the strangest, most thoroughly different moment since

human beings took up farming, 10,000 years ago, and time more or less commenced. Since then time has flowed in one direction—toward *more*, which we have taken to be progress. At first the momentum was gradual, almost imperceptible, checked by wars and the Dark Ages and plagues and taboos; but in recent centuries it has accelerated, the curve of every graph steepening like the Himalayas rising from the Asian steppe. We have climbed quite high. Of course, fifty years ago one could have said the same thing, and fifty years before that, and fifty years before

that. But in each case it would have been premature. We've increased the population fourfold in that 150 years; the amount of food we grow has gone up faster still; the size of our economy has quite simply exploded.

But now—now may be the special time. So special that in the Western world we might each of us consider, among many other things, having only one child—that is, reproducing at a rate as low as that at which human beings have ever voluntarily reproduced. Is this really





necessary? Are we finally running up against some limits?

To try to answer this question, we need to ask another: *How many of us will there be in the near future?* Here is a piece of news that may alter the way we see the planet—an indication that we live at a special moment. At least at first blush the news is hopeful. *New demographic evidence shows that it is at least possible that a child born today will live long enough to see the peak of human population.*

Around the world people are choosing to have fewer and fewer children—not just in China, where the government forces it on them, but in almost every nation outside the poorest parts of Africa. Population growth rates are lower than they have been at any time since the Second World War. In the past three decades the average woman in the developing world, excluding China, has gone from bearing six children to bearing four. Even in Bangladesh the average has fallen from six to fewer than four; even in the mullahs' Iran it has dropped by four children. If this keeps up, the population of the world will not quite double again; United Nations analysts offer as their mid-range projection that it will top out at 10 to 11 billion, up from just under six billion at the moment. The world is still growing, at nearly a record pace—we add a New York City every month, almost a Mexico every year, almost an India every decade. But the rate of growth is slowing; it is no longer “exponential,” “unstoppable,” “inexorable,” “unchecked,” “cancerous.” If current trends hold, the world's population will all but stop growing before the twenty-first century is out.

And that will be none too soon. There is no way we could keep going as we have been. The *increase* in human population in the 1990s has exceeded the *total* population in 1600. The population has grown more since 1950 than it did during the previous four million years. The reasons for our recent rapid growth are pretty clear. Although the Industrial Revolution speeded historical growth rates considerably, it was really the public-health revolution, and its spread to the Third World at the end of the Second World War, that set us galloping. Vaccines and antibiotics came all at once, and right behind came population. In Sri Lanka in the late 1940s life expectancy was rising at least a year every twelve months. How much difference did this make? Consider the United States: if people died throughout this century at the same rate as they did at its beginning, America's population would be 140 million, not 270 million.

If it is relatively easy to explain why populations grew so fast after the Second World War, it is much harder to explain why the growth is now slowing. Experts confidently supply answers, some of them contradictory: “Development is the best contraceptive”—or education, or the em-

We can't easily repair not from something

powerment of women, or hard times that force families to postpone having children. For each example there is a counterexample. Ninety-seven percent of women in the Arab sheikhdom of Oman know about contraception, and yet they average more than six children apiece. Turks have used contraception at about the same rate as the Japanese, but their birth rate is twice as high. And so on. It is not AIDS that will slow population growth, except in a few African countries. It is not horrors like the civil war in Rwanda, which claimed half a million lives—a loss the planet can make up for in two days. All that matters is how often individual men and women decide that they want to reproduce.

Will the drop continue? It had better. UN mid-range projections assume that women in the developing world will soon average two children apiece—the rate at which population growth stabilizes. If fertility remained at current levels, the population would reach the absurd figure of 296 billion in just 150 years. Even if it dropped to 2.5 children per woman and then stopped falling, the population would still reach 28 billion.

But let's trust that this time the demographers have got it right. Let's trust that we have rounded the turn and we're in the home stretch. Let's trust that the planet's population really will double only one more time. Even so, this is a case of good news, bad news. The good news is that we won't grow forever. The bad news is that there are six billion of us already, a number the world strains to support. One more near-doubling—four or five billion more people—will nearly double that strain. Will these be the five billion straws that break the camel's back?

W

Big Questions

E'VE answered the question *How many of us will there be?* But to figure out how near we are to any limits, we need to ask something else: *How big are we?* This is not so simple. Not only do we vary greatly in how much food and energy and water and minerals we consume, but each of us varies over time. William Catton, who was a so-

the new kinds of pollution. They come going wrong but from normal life.

ciologist at Washington State University before his retirement, once tried to calculate the amount of energy human beings use each day. In hunter-gatherer times it was about 2,500 calories, all of it food. That is the daily energy intake of a common dolphin. A modern human being uses 31,000 calories a day, most of it in the form of fossil fuel. That is the intake of a pilot whale. And the average American uses six times that—as much as a sperm whale. We have become, in other words, different from the people we used to be. Not kinder or unkind, not deeper or stupider—our natures seem to have changed little since Homer. We've just gotten bigger. We appear to be the same species, with stomachs of the same size, but we aren't. It's as if each of us were trailing a big Macy's-parade balloon around, feeding it constantly.

So it doesn't do much good to stare idly out the window of your 737 as you fly from New York to Los Angeles and see that there's *plenty* of empty space down there. Sure enough, you could crowd lots more people into the nation or onto the planet. The entire world population could fit into Texas, and each person could have an area equal to the floor space of a typical U.S. home. If people were willing to stand, everyone on earth could fit comfortably into half of Rhode Island. Holland is crowded and is doing just fine.

But this ignores the balloons above our heads, our hungry shadow selves, our sperm-whale appetites. As soon as we started farming, we started setting aside extra land to support ourselves. Now each of us needs not only a little plot of cropland and a little pasture for the meat we eat but also a little forest for timber and paper, a little mine, a little oil well. Giants have big feet. Some scientists in Vancouver tried to calculate one such "footprint" and found that although 1.7 million people lived on a million acres surrounding their city, those people required 21.5 million acres of land to support them—wheat fields in Alberta, oil fields in Saudi Arabia, tomato fields in California. People in Manhattan are as dependent on faraway resources as people on the Mir space station.

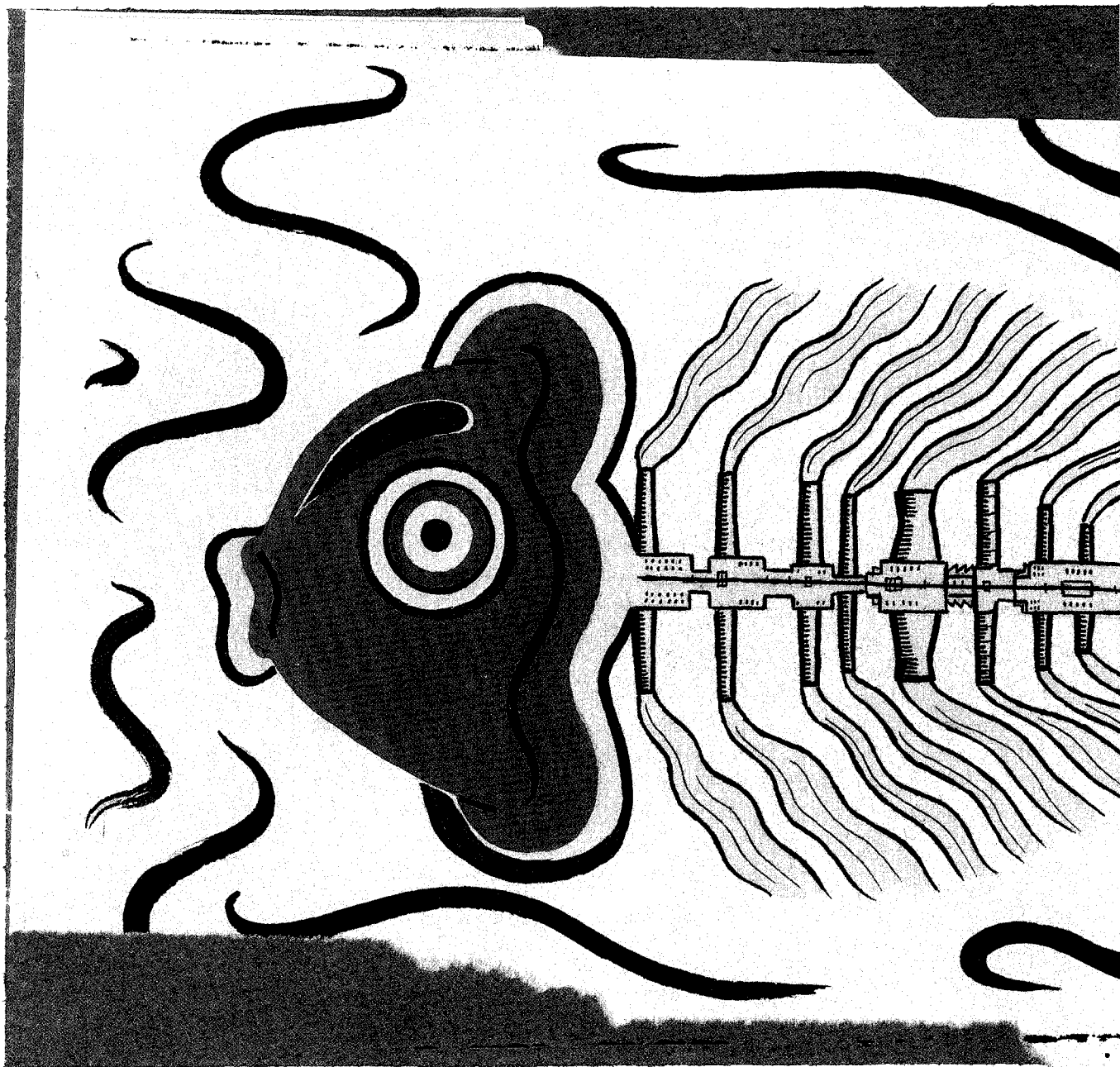
Those balloons above our heads can shrink or grow, depending on how we choose to live. All over the earth people who were once tiny are suddenly growing like Alice when she ate the cake. In China per capita income has dou-

bled since the early 1980s. People there, though still Lilliputian in comparison with us, are twice their former size. They eat much higher on the food chain, understandably, than they used to: China slaughters more pigs than any other nation, and it takes four pounds of grain to produce one pound of pork. When, a decade ago, the United Nations examined sustainable development, it issued a report saying that the economies of the developing countries needed to be five to ten times as large to move poor people to an acceptable standard of living—with all that this would mean in terms of demands on oil wells and forests.

That sounds almost impossible. For the moment, though, let's not pass judgment. We're still just doing math. There are going to be lots of us. We're going to be big. But lots of us in relation to what? Big in relation to what? It could be that compared with the world we inhabit, we're still scarce and small. Or not. So now we need to consider a third question: *How big is the earth?*

ANY state wildlife biologist can tell you how many deer a given area can support—how much browse there is for the deer to eat before they begin to suppress the reproduction of trees, before they begin to starve in the winter. He can calculate how many wolves a given area can support too, in part by counting the number of deer. And so on, up and down the food chain. It's not an exact science, but it comes pretty close—at least compared with figuring out the carrying capacity of the earth for human beings, which is an art so dark that anyone with any sense stays away from it.

Consider the difficulties. Human beings, unlike deer, can eat almost anything and live at almost any level they choose. Hunter-gatherers used 2,500 calories of energy a day, whereas modern Americans use seventy-five times that. Human beings, unlike deer, can import what they need from thousands of miles away. And human beings, unlike deer, can figure out new ways to do old things. If, like deer, we needed to browse on conifers to survive, we could cross-breed lush new strains, chop down competing trees, irrigate forests, spray a thousand chemicals, freeze or dry the tender buds at the peak of harvest, genetically engineer



new strains—and advertise the merits of maple buds until everyone was ready to switch. The variables are so great that professional demographers rarely even bother trying to figure out carrying capacity. The demographer Joel Cohen, in his potent book *How Many People Can the Earth Support?* (1995), reports that at two recent meetings of the Population Association of America exactly none of the more than 200 symposia dealt with carrying capacity.

But the difficulty hasn't stopped other thinkers. This is, after all, as big a question as the world offers. Plato, Euripides, and Polybius all worried that we would run out of

food if the population kept growing; for centuries a steady stream of economists, environmentalists, and zealots and cranks of all sorts have made it their business to issue estimates either dire or benign. The most famous, of course, came from the Reverend Thomas Malthus. Writing in 1798, he proposed that the growth of population, being "geometric," would soon outstrip the supply of food. Though he changed his mind and rewrote his famous essay, it's the original version that people have remembered—and lambasted—ever since. Few other writers have found critics in as many corners. Not only have conservatives made



Malthus's name a byword for ludicrous alarmism, but Karl Marx called his essay "a libel on the human race," Friedrich Engels believed that "we are forever secure from the fear of overpopulation," and even Mao Zedong attacked Malthus by name, adding, "Of all things in the world people are the most precious."

Each new generation of Malthusians has made new predictions that the end was near, and has been proved wrong. The late 1960s saw an upsurge of Malthusian panic. In 1967 William and Paul Paddock published a book called *Famine—1975!*, which contained a triage list: "Egypt:

Can't-be-saved. . . . Tunisia: Should Receive Food. . . . India: Can't-be-saved." Almost simultaneously Paul Ehrlich wrote, in his best-selling *The Population Bomb* (1968), "The battle to feed all of humanity is over. In the 1970s, the world will undergo famines—hundreds of millions of people will starve to death." It all seemed so certain, so firmly in keeping with a world soon to be darkened by the first oil crisis.

But that's not how it worked out. India fed herself. The United States still ships surplus grain around the world. As the astute Harvard social scientist Amartya Sen points out, "Not only is food generally much cheaper to buy today, in constant dollars, than it was in Malthus's time, but it also has become cheaper during recent decades." So far, in other words, the world has more or less supported us. Too many people starve (60 percent of children in South Asia are stunted by malnutrition), but both the total number and the percentage have dropped in recent decades, thanks mainly to the successes of the Green Revolution. Food production has tripled since the Second World War, outpacing even population growth. We may be giants, but we are clever giants.

So Malthus was wrong. Over and over again he was wrong. No other prophet has ever been proved wrong so many times. At the moment, his stock is especially low. One group of technological optimists now believes that people will continue to improve their standard of living precisely *because* they increase their numbers. This group's intellectual fountainhead is a brilliant Danish economist named Ester Boserup—a sort of anti-Malthus, who in 1965 argued that the gloomy cleric had it backward. The more people, Boserup said, the more progress. Take agriculture as an example: the first farmers, she pointed out, were slash-and-burn cultivators, who might farm a plot for a year or two and then move on, not returning for maybe two decades. As the population grew, however, they had to return more frequently to the same plot. That meant problems: compacted, depleted, weedy soils. But those new problems meant new solutions: hoes, manure, compost, crop rotation, irrigation. Even in this century, Boserup said, necessity-induced invention has meant that "intensive systems of agriculture replaced extensive systems," accelerating the rate of food production.

Boserup's closely argued examples have inspired a less cautious group of popularizers, who point out that standards of living have risen all over the world even as population has grown. The most important benefit, in fact, that population growth bestows on an economy is to increase the stock of useful knowledge, insisted Julian Simon, the best known of the so-called cornucopians, who died earli-



er this year. We might run out of copper, but who cares? The mere fact of shortage will lead someone to invent a substitute. "The main fuel to speed our progress is our stock of knowledge, and the brake is our lack of imagination," Simon wrote. "The ultimate resource is people—skilled, spirited, and hopeful people who will exert their wills and imaginations for their own benefit, and so, inevitably, for the benefit of us all."

Simon and his ilk owe their success to this: they have been right so far. The world has behaved as they predicted. India hasn't starved. Food is cheap. But Malthus never goes away. The idea that we might grow too big can be disproved only for the moment—never for good. We might always be on the threshold of a special time, when the mechanisms described by Boserup and Simon stop working. It is true that Malthus was wrong when the population doubled from 750 million to 1.5 billion. It is true that Malthus was wrong when the population doubled from 1.5 billion to three billion. It is true that Malthus was wrong when the population doubled from three billion to six billion. Will Malthus still be wrong fifty years from now?

Looking at Limits

THE case that the next doubling, the one we're now experiencing, might be the difficult one can begin as readily with the Stanford biologist Peter Vitousek as with anyone else. In 1986 Vitousek decided to calculate how much of the earth's "primary productivity" went to support human beings. He added together the grain we ate, the corn we fed our cows, and the forests we cut for timber and paper; he added the losses in food as we overgrazed grassland and turned it into desert. And when he was finished adding, the number he came up with was 38.8 percent. We use 38.8 percent of everything the world's plants don't need to keep themselves alive; directly or indirectly, we consume 38.8 percent of what it is possible to eat. "That's a relatively large number," Vitousek says. "It should give pause to people who think we are far from any limits." Though he never drops the measured tone of an academic, Vitousek speaks with considerable emphasis: "There's a sense among some economists that we're so far from any biophysical limits. I think that's not supported by the evidence."

For another antidote to the good cheer of someone like Julian Simon, sit down with the Cornell biologist David Pimentel. He believes that we're in big trouble. Odd facts

stud his conversation—for example, a nice head of iceberg lettuce is 95 percent water and contains just fifty calories of energy, but it takes 400 calories of energy to grow that head of lettuce in California's Central Valley, and another 1,800 to ship it east. ("There's practically no nutrition in the damn stuff anyway," Pimentel says. "Cabbage is a lot better, and we can grow it in upstate New York.") Pimentel has devoted the past three decades to tracking the planet's capacity, and he believes that we're already too crowded—that the earth can support only two billion people over the long run at a middle-class standard of living, and that trying to support more is doing great damage. He has spent considerable time studying soil erosion, for instance. Every raindrop that hits exposed ground is like a small explosion, launching soil particles into the air. On a slope, more than half of the soil contained in those splashes is carried downhill. If crop residue—cornstalks, say—is left in the field after harvest, it helps to shield the soil: the raindrop doesn't hit as hard. But in the developing world, where firewood is scarce, peasants burn those cornstalks for cooking fuel. About 60 percent of crop residues in China and 90 percent in Bangladesh are removed and burned, Pimentel says. When planting season comes, dry soils simply blow away. "Our measuring stations pick up Chinese soil in the Hawaiian air when ploughing time comes," he says. "Every year in Florida we pick up African soils in the wind when they start to plough."

The very things that made the Green Revolution so stunning—that made the last doubling possible—now cause trouble. Irrigation ditches, for instance, water 17 percent of all arable land and help to produce a third of all crops. But when flooded soils are baked by the sun, the water evaporates and the minerals in the irrigation water are deposited on the land. A hectare (2.47 acres) can accumulate two to five tons of salt annually, and eventually plants won't grow there. Maybe 10 percent of all irrigated land is affected.

Or think about fresh water for human use. Plenty of rain falls on the earth's surface, but most of it evaporates or roars down to the ocean in spring floods. According to Sandra Postel, the director of the Global Water Policy Project, we're left with about 12,500 cubic kilometers of accessible runoff, which would be enough for current demand except that it's not very well distributed around the globe. And we're not exactly conservationists—we use nearly seven times as much water as we used in 1900. Already 20 percent of the world's population lacks access to potable water, and fights over water divide many regions. Already the Colorado River usually dries out in the desert before it

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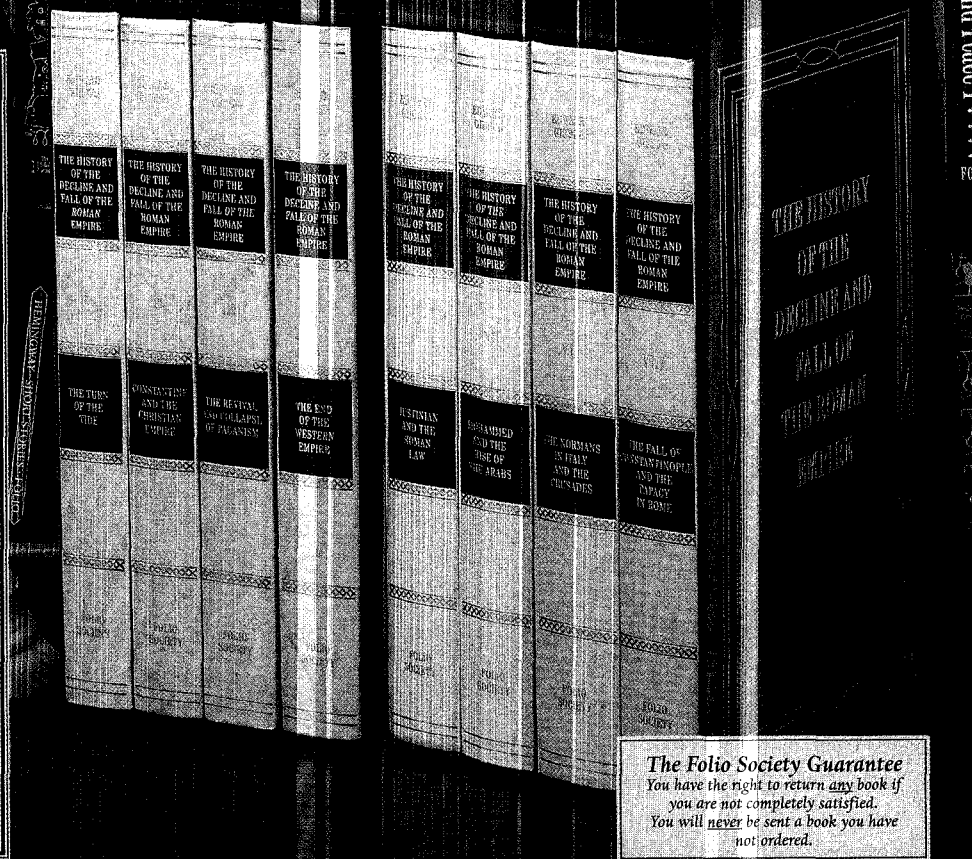
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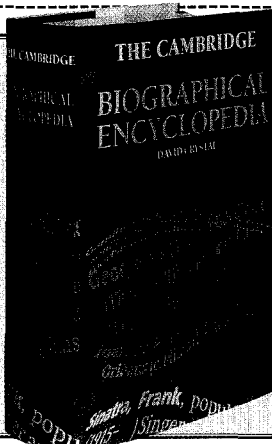
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reaches the Sea of Cortez, making what the mid-century conservationist Aldo Leopold called a “milk and honey wilderness” into some of the nastiest country in North America. Already the Yellow River can run dry for as much as a third of the year. Already only two percent of the Nile’s freshwater flow makes it to the ocean. And we need more water all the time. Producing a ton of grain consumes a thousand tons of water—that’s how much the wheat plant breathes out as it grows. “We estimated that biotechnology might cut the amount of water a plant uses by ten percent,” Pimentel says. “But plant physiologists tell us that’s optimistic—they remind us that water’s a pretty important part of photosynthesis. Maybe we can get five percent.”

What these scientists are saying is simple: human ingenuity can turn sand into silicon chips, allowing the creation of millions of home pages on the utterly fascinating World Wide Web, but human ingenuity cannot forever turn dry sand into soil that will grow food. And there are signs that these skeptics are right—that we are approaching certain physical limits.

I said earlier that food production grew even faster than population after the Second World War. Year after year the yield of wheat and corn and rice rocketed up about three percent annually. It’s a favorite statistic of the eternal optimists. In Julian Simon’s book *The Ultimate Resource* (1981) charts show just how fast the growth was, and how it continually cut the cost of food. Simon wrote, “The obvious implication of this historical trend toward cheaper food—a trend that probably extends back to the beginning of agriculture—is that real prices for food will continue to drop. . . . It is a fact that portends more drops in price and even less scarcity in the future.”

A few years after Simon’s book was published, however, the data curve began to change. That rocketing growth in grain production ceased; now the gains were coming in tiny increments, too small to keep pace with population growth. The world reaped its largest harvest of grain per capita in 1984; since then the amount of corn and wheat and rice per person has fallen by six percent. Grain stockpiles have shrunk to less than two months’ supply.

No one knows quite why. The collapse of the Soviet Union contributed to the trend—cooperative farms sud-

denly found the fertilizer supply shut off and spare parts for the tractor hard to come by. But there were other causes, too, all around the world—the salinization of irrigated fields, the erosion of topsoil, the conversion of prime farmland into residential areas, and all the other things that environmentalists had been warning about for years. It’s possible that we’ll still turn production around and start it rocketing again. Charles C. Mann, writing in *Science*, quotes experts who believe that in the future a “gigantic, multi-year, multi-billion-dollar scientific effort, a kind of agricultural ‘person-on-the-moon project,’” might do the trick. The next great hope of the optimists is genetic engineering, and scientists have indeed managed to induce resistance to pests and disease in some plants. To get more yield, though, a cornstalk must be made to put out another ear, and conventional breeding may have exhausted the possibilities. There’s a sense that we’re running into walls.

We won’t start producing *less* food. Wheat is not like oil, whose flow from the spigot will simply slow to a trickle one day. But we may be getting to the point where gains will be small and hard to come by. The spectacular increases may be behind us. One researcher told Mann, “Producing higher yields will no longer be like unveiling a new model of a car. We won’t be pulling off the sheet and there it is, a two-fold yield increase.” Instead the process will be “incremental, torturous, and slow.” And there are five billion more of us to come.

So far we’re still fed; gas is cheap at the pump; the supermarket grows ever larger. We’ve been warned again and again about approaching limits, and we’ve never quite reached them. So maybe—how tempting to believe it!—they don’t really exist. For every Paul Ehrlich there’s a man like Lawrence Summers, the former World Bank chief economist and current deputy secretary of the Treasury, who writes, “There are no . . . limits to carrying capacity of the Earth that are likely to bind at any time in the foreseeable future.” And we are talking about the future—nothing can be *proved*.

But we can calculate risks, figure the odds that each side may be right. Joel Cohen made the most thorough attempt to do so in *How Many People Can the Earth Support?* Cohen collected and examined every estimate of carrying

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capacity made in recent decades, from that of a Harvard oceanographer who thought in 1976 that we might have food enough for 40 billion people to that of a Brown University researcher who calculated in 1991 that we might be able to sustain 5.9 billion (our present population), but only if we were principally vegetarians. One study proposed that if photosynthesis was the limiting factor, the earth might support a trillion people; an Australian economist proved, in calculations a decade apart, that we could manage populations of 28 billion and 157 billion. None of the studies is wise enough to examine every variable, to reach by itself the “right” number. When Cohen compared the dozens of studies, however, he uncovered something pretty interesting: the median low value for the planet’s carrying capacity was 7.7 billion people, and the median high value was 12 billion. That, of course, is just the range that the UN predicts we will inhabit by the middle of the next century. Cohen wrote,

The human population of the Earth now travels in the zone where a substantial fraction of scholars have estimated upper limits on human population size. . . . The possibility must be considered seriously that the number of people on the Earth has reached, or will reach within half a century, the maximum number the Earth can support in modes of life that we and our children and their children will choose to want.

Earth2

THROUGHOUT the 10,000 years of recorded human history the planet—the physical planet—has been a stable place. In every single year of those 10,000 there have been earthquakes, volcanoes, hurricanes, cyclones, typhoons, floods, forest fires, sandstorms, hailstorms, plagues, crop failures, heat waves, cold spells, blizzards, and droughts. But these have never shaken the basic predictability of the planet as a whole. Some of the earth’s land areas—the Mediterranean rim, for instance—have been deforested beyond recovery, but so far these shifts have always been local.

Among other things, this stability has made possible the insurance industry—has underwritten the underwriters. Insurers can analyze the risk in any venture because they know the ground rules. If you want to build a house on the coast of Florida, they can calculate with reasonable accuracy the chance that it will be hit by a hurricane and the speed of the winds circling that hurricane’s eye. If they couldn’t, they would have no way to set your premium—they’d just be gambling. They’re always gambling a little, of course: they don’t know if that hurricane is coming next year or next century. But the earth’s physical stability is the house edge in this casino. As Julian Simon pointed out, “A prediction based on past data can be sound if it is sensible to assume that the past and the future belong to the same statistical universe.”

So what does it mean that alone among the earth’s great pools of money and power, insurance companies are beginning to take the idea of global climate change quite seriously? What does it mean that the payout for weather-related damage climbed from \$16 billion during the entire 1980s to \$48 billion in the years 1990–1994? What does it mean that top European insurance executives have begun consulting with Greenpeace about global warming? What does it mean that the insurance giant Swiss Re, which paid out \$291.5 million in the wake of Hurricane Andrew, ran an ad in the *Financial Times* showing its corporate logo bent sideways by a storm?

These things mean, I think, that the possibility that we live on a new earth cannot be discounted entirely as a fever dream. Above, I showed attempts to calculate carrying capacity for the world as we have always known it, the world we were born into. But what if, all of a sudden, we live on some other planet? On Earth2?

In 1955 Princeton University held an international symposium on “Man’s Role in Changing the Face of the Earth.” By this time anthropogenic carbon, sulfur, and nitrogen were pouring into the atmosphere, deforestation was already widespread, and the population was nearing three billion. Still, by comparison with the present, we remained a puny race. Cars were as yet novelties in many places. Tropical forests were still intact, as were much of the ancient woods of the West Coast, Canada, and Siberia. The world’s economy was a quarter its present size. By most calculations we have used more natural resources since 1955 than in all of human history to that time.

Another symposium was organized in 1987 by Clark University, in Massachusetts. This time even the title made clear what was happening—not “Man and Nature,” not “Man’s Role in Changing the Face of the Earth,” but “The

**storms, 10 percent
enormous numbers.**



Earth as Transformed by Human Actions.” Attendees were no longer talking about local changes or what would take place in the future. “In our judgment,” they said, “the biosphere has accumulated, or is on its way to accumulating, such a magnitude and variety of changes that it may be said to have been transformed.”

Many of these changes come from a direction that Malthus didn’t consider. He and most of his successors were transfixed by *sources*—by figuring out whether and how we could find enough trees or corn or oil. We’re good at finding more stuff; as the price rises, we look harder. The lights never did go out, despite many predictions to the contrary on the first Earth Day. We found more oil, and we still have lots and lots of coal. Meanwhile, we’re driving big cars again, and why not? As of this writing, the price of gas has dropped below a dollar a gallon across much of the nation. Who can believe in limits while driving a Suburban? But perhaps, like an audience watching a magician wave his wand, we’ve been distracted from the real story.

THAT real story was told in the most recent attempt to calculate our size—a special section in *Science* published last summer. The authors spoke bluntly in the lead article. Forget man “transforming” nature—we live, they concluded, on “a human-dominated planet,” where “no ecosystem on Earth’s surface is free of pervasive human influence.” It’s not that we’re running out of stuff. What we’re running out of is what the scientists call “sinks”—places to put the by-products of our large appetites. Not garbage dumps (we could go on using Pampers till the end of time and still have empty space left to toss them away) but the atmospheric equivalent of garbage dumps.

It wasn’t hard to figure out that there were limits on how much coal smoke we could pour into the air of a single city. It took a while longer to figure out that building ever higher smokestacks merely lofted the haze farther afield, raining down acid on whatever mountain range lay to the east. Even that, however, we are slowly fixing, with scrubbers and different mixtures of fuel. We can’t so easily repair the new kinds of pollution. These do not come from something going wrong—some engine without a catalytic converter, some waste-water pipe without a filter, some smokestack without a scrubber. New kinds of pollution come instead from things going as they’re supposed to go—but at such a high volume that they overwhelm the planet. They come from normal human life—but there are so many of us living those normal lives that something abnormal is happening. And that something is so different from the old forms of

pollution that it confuses the issue even to use the word.

Consider nitrogen, for instance. Almost 80 percent of the atmosphere is nitrogen gas. But before plants can absorb it, it must become “fixed”—bonded with carbon, hydrogen, or oxygen. Nature does this trick with certain kinds of algae and soil bacteria, and with lightning. Before human beings began to alter the nitrogen cycle, these mechanisms provided 90–150 million metric tons of nitrogen a year. Now human activity adds 130–150 million more tons. Nitrogen isn’t pollution—it’s essential. And we are using more of it all the time. Half the industrial nitrogen fertilizer used in human history has been applied since 1984. As a result, coastal waters and estuaries bloom with toxic algae while oxygen concentrations dwindle, killing fish; as a result, nitrous oxide traps solar heat. And once the gas is in the air, it stays there for a century or more.

Or consider methane, which comes out of the back of a cow or the top of a termite mound or the bottom of a rice paddy. As a result of our determination to raise more cattle, cut down more tropical forest (thereby causing termite populations to explode), and grow more rice, methane concentrations in the atmosphere are more than twice as high as they have been for most of the past 160,000 years. And methane traps heat—very efficiently.

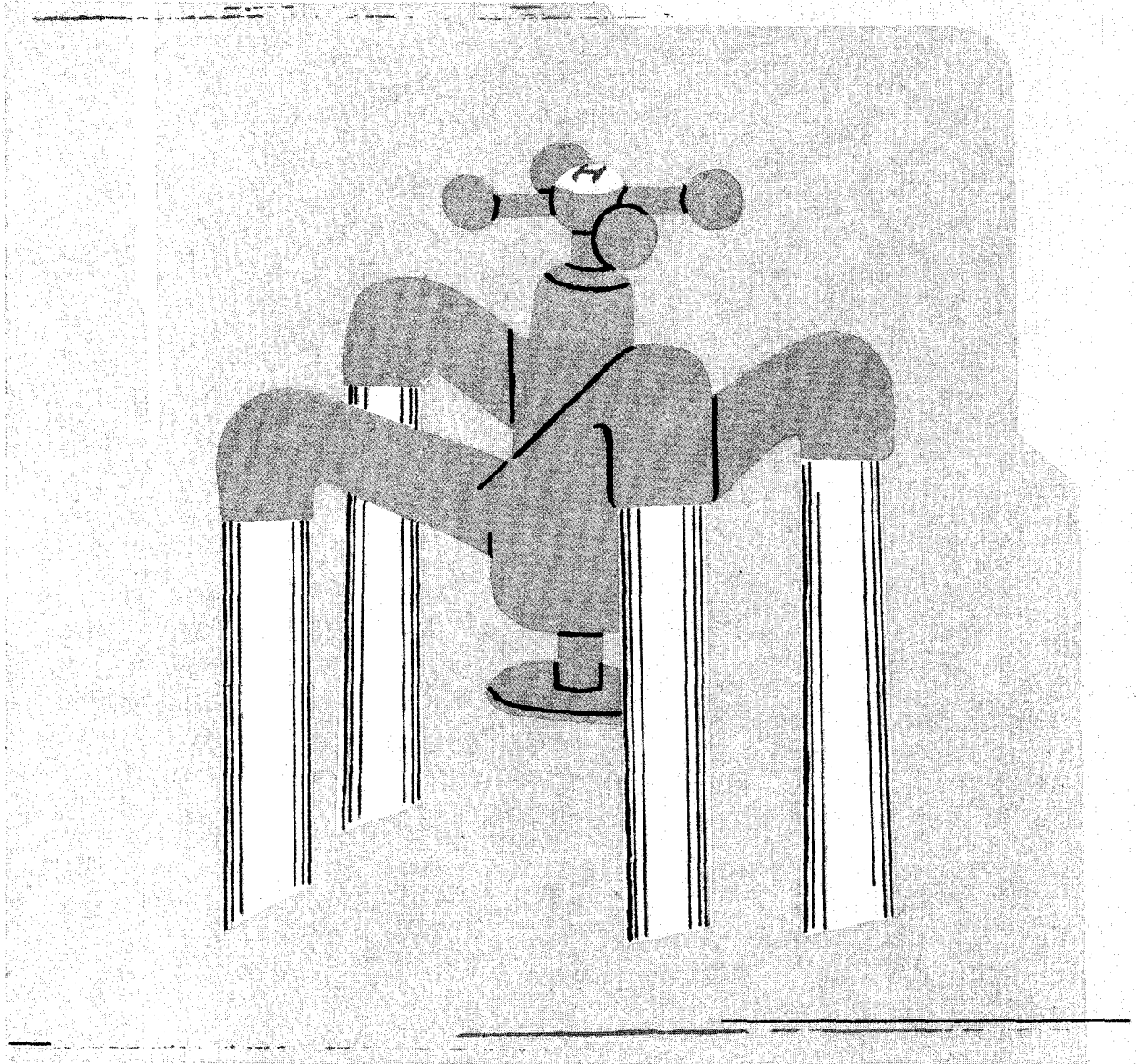
OR consider carbon dioxide. In fact, concentrate on carbon dioxide. If we had to pick one problem to obsess about over the next fifty years, we’d do well to make it CO₂—which is not pollution either. Carbon *monoxide* is pollution: it kills you if you breathe enough of it. But carbon *dioxide*, carbon with two oxygen atoms, can’t do a blessed thing to you. If you’re reading this indoors, you’re breathing more CO₂ than you’ll ever get outside. For generations, in fact, engineers said that an engine burned clean if it produced only water vapor and carbon dioxide.

Here’s the catch: that engine produces a *lot* of CO₂. A gallon of gas weighs about eight pounds. When it’s burned in a car, about five and a half pounds of carbon, in the form of carbon dioxide, come spewing out the back. It doesn’t matter if the car is a 1958 Chevy or a 1998 Saab. And no filter can reduce that flow—it’s an inevitable by-product of fossil-fuel combustion, which is why CO₂ has been piling up in the atmosphere ever since the Industrial Revolution. Before we started burning oil and coal and gas, the atmosphere contained about 280 parts CO₂ per million. Now the figure is about 360. Unless we do everything we can think of to eliminate fossil fuels from our diet, the air will test out at more

than 500 parts per million fifty or sixty years from now, whether it's sampled in the South Bronx or at the South Pole.

This matters because, as we all know by now, the molecular structure of this clean, natural, common element that we are adding to every cubic foot of the atmosphere surrounding us traps heat that would otherwise radiate back out to space. Far more than even methane and ni-

Trends" report. Carbon monoxide was down by 37 percent since 1986, lead was down by 78 percent, and particulate matter had dropped by nearly a quarter. If you lived in the San Fernando Valley, you saw the mountains more often than you had a decade before. The air was *cleaner*, but it was also *different*—richer with CO₂. And its new composition may change almost everything.



trous oxide, CO₂ causes global warming—the greenhouse effect—and climate change. Far more than any other single factor, it is turning the earth we were born on into a new planet.

Remember, this is not pollution as we have known it. In the spring of last year the Environmental Protection Agency issued its “Ten-Year Air Quality and Emissions

Ten years ago I wrote a book called *The End of Nature*, which was the first volume for a general audience about carbon dioxide and climate change, an early attempt to show that human beings now dominate the earth. Even then global warming was only a hypothesis—strong and gaining credibility all the time, but a hypothesis nonetheless. By the late 1990s it has become a fact. For ten years,

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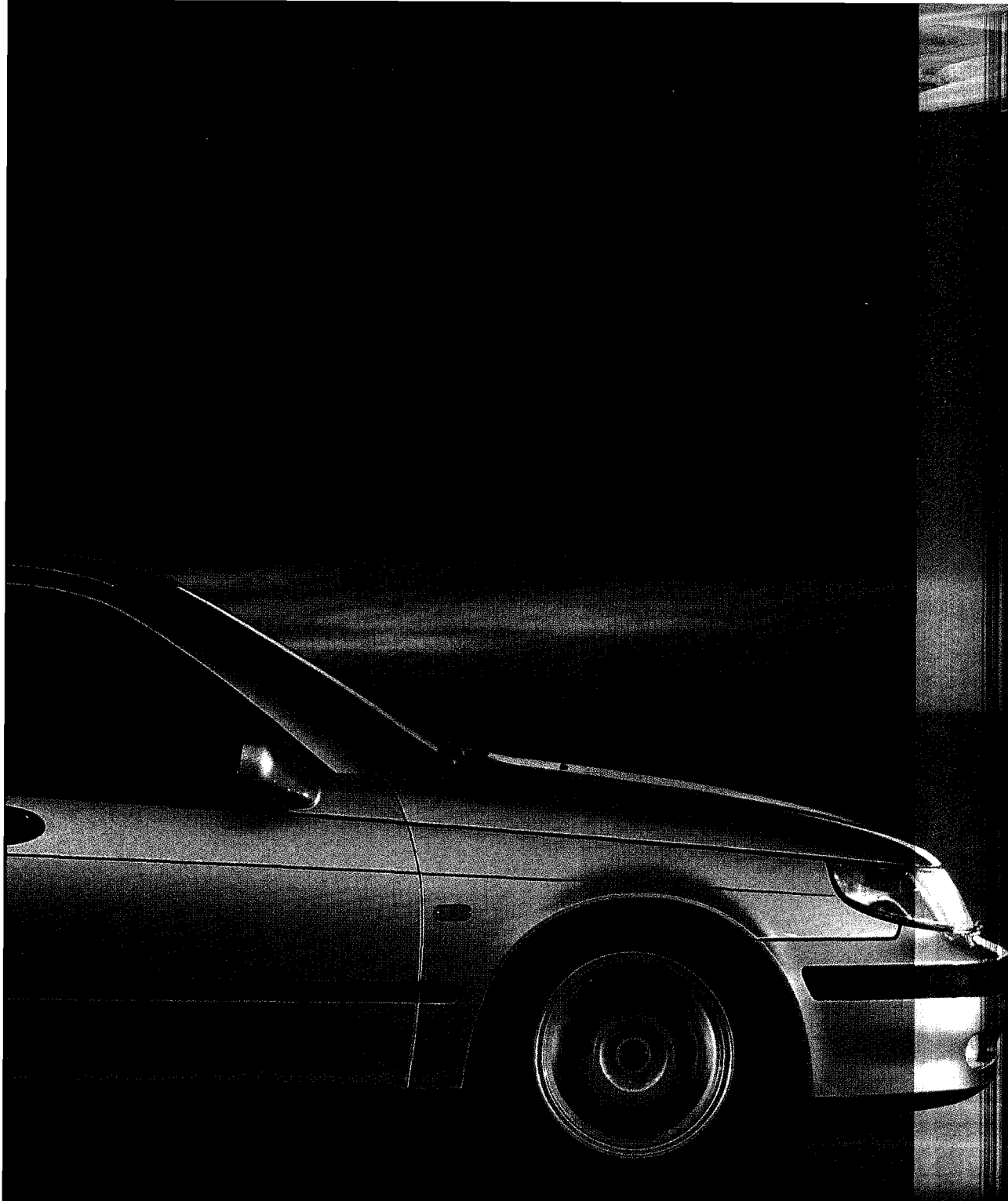
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with heavy funding from governments around the world, scientists launched satellites, monitored weather balloons, studied clouds. Their work culminated in a long-awaited report from the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, released in the fall of 1995. The panel's 2,000 scientists, from every corner of the globe, summed up their findings in this dry but historic bit of understatement: "The balance of evidence suggests that there is a discernible human influence on global climate." That is to say, we are heating up the planet—substantially. If we don't reduce emissions of carbon dioxide and other gases, the panel warned, temperatures will probably rise 3.6° Fahrenheit by 2100, and perhaps as much as 6.3°.

You may think you've already heard a lot about global warming. But most of our sense of the problem is behind the curve. Here's the current news: the changes are already well under way. When politicians and businessmen talk about "future risks," their rhetoric is outdated. This is not a problem for the distant future, or even for the near future. The planet has already heated up by a degree or more. We

because warmer air holds more water vapor than the colder atmosphere of the old earth; more water evaporates from the ocean, meaning more clouds, more rain, more snow. Engineers designing storm sewers, bridges, and culverts used to plan for what they called the "hundred-year storm." That is, they built to withstand the worst flooding or wind that history led them to expect in the course of a century. Since that history no longer applies, Karl says, "there isn't really a hundred-year event anymore . . . we seem to be getting these storms of the century every couple of years." When Grand Forks, North Dakota, disappeared beneath the Red River in the spring of last year, some meteorologists referred to it as "a 500-year flood"—meaning, essentially, that all bets are off. Meaning that these aren't acts of God. "If you look out your window, part of what you see in terms of the weather is produced by ourselves," Karl says. "If you look out the window fifty years from now, we're going to be responsible for more of it."

Twenty percent more bad storms, 10 percent more winter precipitation—these are enormous numbers. It's like open-

What does it mean that insurance now taking the idea of global climate

are perhaps a quarter of the way into the greenhouse era, and the effects are already being felt. From a new heaven, filled with nitrogen, methane, and carbon, a new earth is being born. If some alien astronomer is watching us, she's doubtless puzzled. This is the most obvious effect of our numbers and our appetites, and the key to understanding why the size of our population suddenly poses such a risk.

ing the newspaper to read that the average American is smarter by 30 IQ points. And the same data showed increases in drought, too. With more water in the atmosphere, there's less in the soil, according to Kevin Trenberth, of the National Center for Atmospheric Research. Those parts of the continent that are normally dry—the eastern sides of mountains, the plains and deserts—are even drier, as the higher average temperatures evaporate more of what rain does fall. "You get wilting plants and eventually drought faster than you would otherwise," Trenberth says. And when the rain does come, it's often so intense that much of it runs off before it can soak into the soil.

So—wetter and drier. *Different.*

In 1958 Charles Keeling, of the Scripps Institution of Oceanography, set up the world's single most significant scientific instrument in a small hut on the slope of Hawaii's Mauna Loa volcano. Forty years later it continues without fail to track the amount of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. The graphs that it produces show that this most important greenhouse gas has steadily increased for forty years. That's the main news.

W *Stormy and Warm*

HAT does this new world feel like? For one thing, it's stormier than the old one. Data analyzed last year by Thomas Karl, of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, showed that total winter precipitation in the United States had increased by 10 percent since 1900 and that "extreme precipitation events"—rainstorms that dumped more than two inches of water in twenty-four hours and blizzards—had increased by 20 percent. That's



It has also shown something else of interest in recent years—a sign that this new atmosphere is changing the planet. Every year CO₂ levels dip in the spring, when plants across the Northern Hemisphere begin to grow, soaking up carbon dioxide. And every year in the fall decaying plants and soils release CO₂ back into the atmosphere. So along with the steady upward trend, there's an annual seesaw, an oscillation that is suddenly growing more pronounced. The size of that yearly tooth on the graph is 20 percent greater than it was in the early 1960s, as Keeling reported in the journal *Nature*, in July of 1996. Or, in the words of Rhys Roth, writing in a newsletter of the Atmosphere Alliance, the earth is “breathing deeper.” More vegetation must be growing, stimulated by higher temperatures. And the earth is breathing earlier, too. Spring is starting about a week earlier in the 1990s than it was in the 1970s, Keeling said.

Other scientists had a hard time crediting Keeling's study—the effect seemed so sweeping. But the following April a research team led by R. B. Myneni, of Boston University, and including Keeling, reached much the same

in the soil.” And it's not clear that the grain belt will have the water it needs as the climate warms. In 1988, a summer of record heat across the grain belt, harvests plummeted, because the very heat that produces more storms also causes extra evaporation. What *is* clear is that fundamental shifts are under way in the operation of the planet. And we are very early yet in the greenhouse era.

The changes are basic. The freezing level in the atmosphere—the height at which the air temperature reaches 32°F—has been gaining altitude since 1970 at the rate of nearly fifteen feet a year. Not surprisingly, tropical and subtropical glaciers are melting at what a team of Ohio State researchers termed “striking” rates. Speaking at a press conference last spring, Ellen Mosley-Thompson, a member of the Ohio State team, was asked if she was sure of her results. She replied, “I don't know quite what to say. I've presented the evidence. I gave you the example of the Quelccaya ice cap. It just comes back to the compilation of what's happening at high elevations: the Lewis glacier on Mount Kenya has lost forty percent of its mass; in the Ruwenzori range all the glaciers are in massive retreat. Everything, virtually, in Patagonia, except for just a few glaciers, is retreating. . . . We've seen . . . that plants are moving up the mountains. . . . I frankly don't know what additional evidence you need.”

As the glaciers retreat, a crucial source of fresh water in many tropical countries disappears. These areas are “already water-stressed,” Mosley-Thompson told the Association of American Geographers last year. Now they may be really desperate.

As with the tropics, so with the poles. According to every computer model, in fact, the polar effects are even more pronounced, because the Arctic and the Antarctic will warm much faster than the Equator as carbon dioxide builds up. Scientists manning a research station at Toolik Lake, Alaska, 170 miles north of the Arctic Circle, have watched average summer temperatures rise by about seven degrees in the past two decades. “Those who remember wearing down-lined summer parkas in the 1970s—before the term ‘global warming’ existed—have peeled down to T-shirts in recent summers,” according to the reporter Wendy Hower, writing in the *Fairbanks Daily News-Miner*. It rained briefly at the American base in McMurdo Sound, in Antarctica, during the southern summer of 1997—as strange as if it had snowed in Saudi Arabia. None of this necessarily means that the ice caps will soon slide into the sea, turning Tennessee into beachfront. It simply demonstrates a radical instability in places that have been stable for many thousands of

companies are change seriously?

conclusion by means of a completely different technique. These researchers used satellites to measure the color of sunlight reflected by the earth: light bouncing off green leaves is a different color from light bouncing off bare ground. Their data were even more alarming, because they showed that the increase was happening with almost lightning speed. By 1991 spring above the 45th parallel—a line that runs roughly from Portland, Oregon, to Boston to Milan to Vladivostok—was coming eight days earlier than it had just a decade before. And that was despite increased snowfall from the wetter atmosphere; the snow was simply melting earlier. The earlier spring led to increased plant growth, which sounds like a benefit. The area above the 45th parallel is, after all, the North American and Russian wheat belt. But as Cynthia Rosenzweig, of NASA's Goddard Institute for Space Studies, told *The New York Times*, any such gains may be illusory. For one thing, the satellites were measuring biomass, not yields; tall and leafy plants often produce less grain. Other scientists, the *Times* reported, said that “more rapid plant growth can make for less nutritious crops if there are not enough nutrients available



years. One researcher watched as emperor penguins tried to cope with the early breakup of ice: their chicks had to jump into the water two weeks ahead of schedule, probably guaranteeing an early death. They (like us) evolved on the old earth.

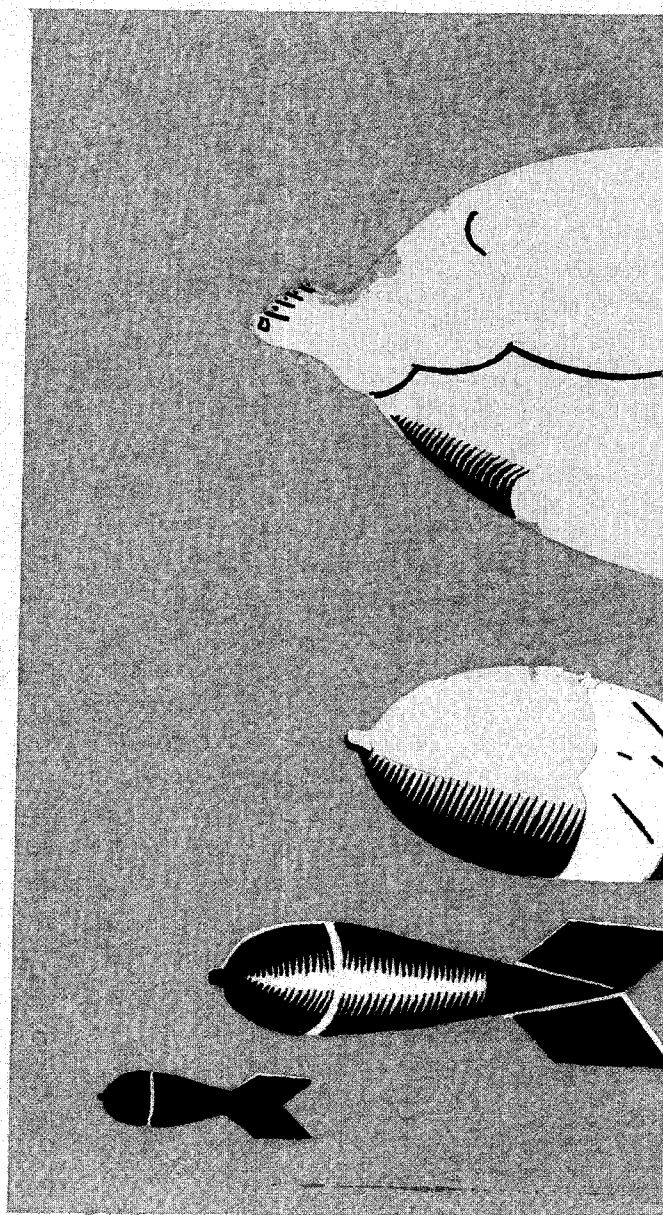
You don't have to go to exotic places to watch the process. Migrating red-winged blackbirds now arrive three weeks earlier in Michigan than they did in 1960. A symposium of scientists reported in 1996 that the Pacific Northwest was warming at four times the world rate. "That the Northwest is warming up fast is not a theory," Richard Gammon, a University of Washington oceanographer, says. "It's a known fact, based on simple temperature readings."

The effects of that warming can be found in the largest phenomena. The oceans that cover most of the planet's surface are clearly rising, both because of melting glaciers and because water expands as it warms. As a result, low-lying Pacific islands already report surges of water washing across the atolls. "It's nice weather and all of a sudden water is pouring into your living room," one Marshall Islands resident told a newspaper reporter. "It's very clear that something is happening in the Pacific, and these islands are feeling it." Global warming will be like a much more powerful version of El Niño that covers the entire globe and lasts forever, or at least until the next big asteroid strikes.

If you want to scare yourself with guesses about what might happen in the near future, there's no shortage of possibilities. Scientists have already observed large-scale shifts in the duration of the El Niño ocean warming, for instance. The Arctic tundra has warmed so much that in some places it now gives off more carbon dioxide than it absorbs—a switch that could trigger a potent feedback loop, making warming ever worse. And researchers studying glacial cores from the Greenland Ice Sheet recently concluded that local climate shifts have occurred with incredible rapidity in the past—18° in one three-year stretch. Other scientists worry that such a shift might be enough to flood the oceans with fresh water and reroute or shut off currents like the Gulf Stream and the North Atlantic, which keep Europe far warmer than it would otherwise be. (See "The Great Climate Flip-flop," by William H. Calvin, January *Atlantic*.) In the words of Wallace Broecker, of Columbia University, a pioneer in the field, "Climate is an angry beast, and we are poking it with sticks."

BUT we don't need worst-case scenarios: best-case scenarios make the point. The population of the earth is going to nearly double one more time. That will bring it to

a level that even the reliable old earth we were born on would be hard-pressed to support. Just at the moment when we need everything to be working as smoothly as possible, we find ourselves inhabiting a new planet, whose carrying capacity we cannot conceivably estimate. We have no idea how much wheat this planet can grow. We don't know what its politics will be like: not if there are going to be heat waves like the one that killed more than 700 Chicagoans in 1995; not if rising sea levels and other effects of climate change create tens of millions of environmental refugees; not if a 1.5° jump in India's tempera-

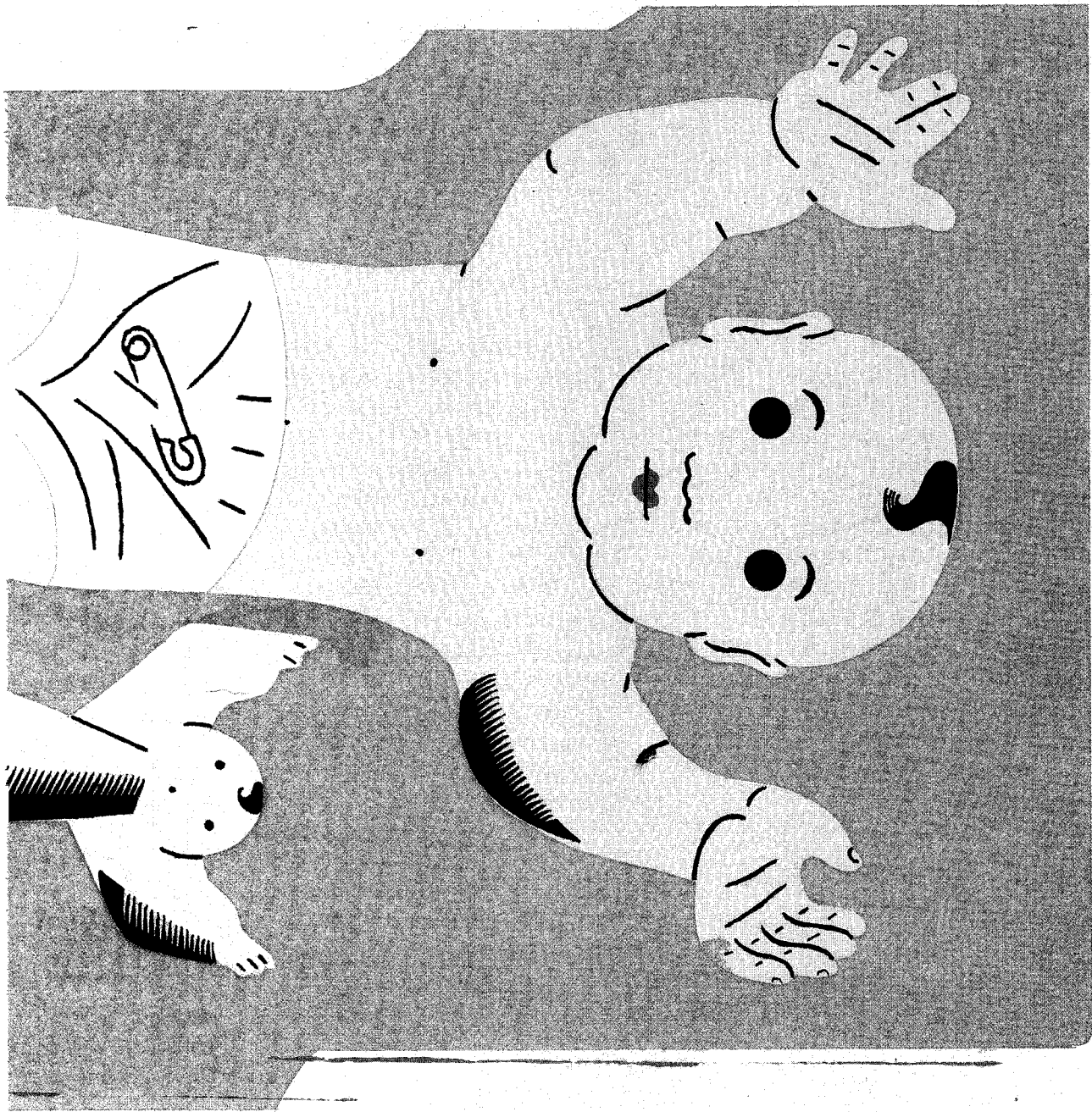


ture could reduce the country's wheat crop by 10 percent or divert its monsoons.

The arguments put forth by cornucopians like Julian Simon—that human intelligence will get us out of any scrape, that human beings are “the ultimate resource,” that Malthusian models “simply do not comprehend key elements of people”—all rest on the same premise: that human beings change the world mainly for the better.

If we live at a special time, the single most special thing about it may be that we are now apparently degrading the most basic functions of the planet. It's not that

we've never altered our surroundings before. Like the beavers at work in my back yard, we have rearranged things wherever we've lived. We've leveled the spots where we built our homes, cleared forests for our fields, often fouled nearby waters with our waste. That's just life. But this is different. In the past ten or twenty or thirty years our impact has grown so much that we're changing even those places we don't inhabit—changing the way the weather works, changing the plants and animals that live at the poles or deep in the jungle. This is total. Of all the remarkable and unexpected things we've ever done as a



Our actions in the next fifty years will and healthy the planet will be for

species, this may be the biggest. Our new storms and new oceans and new glaciers and new springtimes—these are the eighth and ninth and tenth and eleventh wonders of the modern world, and we have lots more where those came from.

We have gotten very large and very powerful, and for the foreseeable future we're stuck with the results. The glaciers won't grow back again anytime soon; the oceans won't drop. We've already done deep and systemic damage. To use a human analogy, we've already said the angry and unforgivable words that will haunt our marriage till its end. And yet we can't simply walk out the door. There's no place to go. We have to salvage what we can of our relationship with the earth, to keep things from getting any worse than they have to be.

If we can bring our various emissions quickly and sharply under control, we *can* limit the damage, reduce dramatically the chance of horrible surprises, preserve more of the biology we were born into. But do not underestimate the task. The UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change projects that an immediate 60 percent reduction in fossil-fuel use is necessary just to stabilize climate at the current level of disruption. Nature may still meet us halfway, but halfway is a long way from where we are now. What's more, we can't delay. If we wait a few decades to get started, we may as well not even begin. It's not like poverty, a concern that's always there for civilizations to address. This is a timed test, like the SAT: two or three decades, and we lay our pencils down. It's *the* test for our generations, and population is a part of the answer.

W *Changing "Unchangeable" Needs*

WHEN we think about overpopulation, we usually think first of the developing world, because that's where 90 percent of new human beings will be added during this final doubling. In *The Population Bomb*, Paul Ehrlich wrote that he hadn't understood the issue emotionally until he traveled to New Delhi, where he climbed into

an ancient taxi, which was hopping with fleas, for the trip to his hotel. "As we crawled through the city, we entered a crowded slum area. . . . the streets seemed alive with people. People eating, people washing, people sleeping. People visiting, arguing, and screaming. . . . People, people, people, people."

We fool ourselves when we think of Third World population growth as producing an imbalance, as Amartya Sen points out. The white world simply went through its population boom a century earlier (when Dickens was writing similar descriptions of London). If UN calculations are correct and Asians and Africans will make up just under 80 percent of humanity by 2050, they will simply have returned, in Sen's words, "to being proportionately almost exactly as numerous as they were before the European industrial revolution."

And of course Asians and Africans, and Latin Americans, are much "smaller" human beings: the balloons that float above their heads are tiny in comparison with ours. Everyone has heard the statistics time and again, usually as part of an attempt to induce guilt. But hear them one more time, with an open mind, and try to think strategically about how we will stave off the dangers to this planet. Pretend it's not a moral problem, just a mathematical one.

- An American uses seventy times as much energy as a Bangladeshi, fifty times as much as a Malagasi, twenty times as much as a Costa Rican.
- Since we live longer, the effect of each of us is further multiplied. In a year an American uses 300 times as much energy as a Malian; over a lifetime he will use 500 times as much.
- Even if all such effects as the clearing of forests and the burning of grasslands are factored in and attributed to poor people, those who live in the poor world are typically responsible for the annual release of a tenth of a ton of carbon each, whereas the average is 3.5 tons for residents of the "consumer" nations of Western Europe, North America, and Japan. The richest tenth of Americans—the people most likely to be reading this magazine—annually emit eleven tons of carbon apiece.
- During the next decade India and China will each add to the planet about ten times as many people as the United



decide how strong centuries to come.

States will—but the stress on the natural world caused by new Americans may exceed that from new Indians and Chinese combined. The 57.5 million Northerners added to our population during this decade will add more greenhouse gases to the atmosphere than the roughly 900 million added Southerners.

These statistics are not eternal. Though inequality between North and South has steadily increased, the economies of the poor nations are now growing faster than those of the West. Sometime early in the next century China will pass the United States as the nation releasing the most carbon dioxide into the atmosphere, though of course it will be nowhere near the West on a per capita basis.

For the moment, then (and it is the moment that counts), we can call the United States the most populous nation on earth, and the one with the highest rate of growth. Though the U.S. population increases by only about three million people a year, through births and immigration together, each of those three million new Americans will consume on average forty or fifty times as much as a person born in the Third World. My daughter, four at this writing, has already used more stuff and added more waste to the environment than most of the world's residents do in a lifetime. In my thirty-seven years I have probably outdone small Indian villages.

Population growth in Rwanda, in Sudan, in El Salvador, in the slums of Lagos, in the highland hamlets of Chile, can devastate *those places*. Growing too fast may mean that they run short of cropland to feed themselves, of firewood to cook their food, of school desks and hospital beds. But population growth in those places doesn't devastate *the planet*. In contrast, we easily absorb the modest annual increases in our population. America seems only a little more crowded with each passing decade in terms of our daily lives. You can still find a parking spot. But the earth simply can't absorb what we are adding to its air and water.

SO if it is we in the rich world, at least as much as they in the poor world, who need to bring this alteration of the earth under control, the question becomes how. Many people who are sure that controlling population is the answer

overseas are equally sure that the answer is different here. If those people are politicians and engineers, they're probably in favor of our living more efficiently—of designing new cars that go much farther on a gallon of gas, or that don't use gas at all. If they're vegetarians, they probably support living more simply—riding bikes or buses instead of driving cars.

Both groups are utterly correct. I've spent much of my career writing about the need for cleverer technologies and humbler aspirations. Environmental damage can be expressed as the product of Population $\times$ Affluence $\times$ Technology. Surely the easiest solution would be to live more simply and more efficiently, and not worry too much about the number of people.

But I've come to believe that those changes in technology and in lifestyle are not going to occur easily and speedily. They'll be begun but not finished in the few decades that really matter. Remember that the pollution we're talking about is not precisely pollution but rather the inevitable result when things go the way we think they should: new filters on exhaust pipes won't do anything about that CO₂. We're stuck with making real changes in how we live. We're stuck with dramatically reducing the amount of fossil fuel we use. And since modern Westerners are practically machines for burning fossil fuel, since virtually everything we do involves burning coal and gas and oil, since we're wedded to petroleum, it's going to be a messy breakup.

So we need to show, before returning again to population, why simplicity and efficiency will not by themselves save the day. Maybe the best place to start is with President Bill Clinton—in particular his reaction to global warming. Clinton is an exquisite scientific instrument, a man whose career is built on his unparalleled ability to sense minute changes in public opinion. He understands our predicament. Speaking to the United Nations early last summer, he said plainly, "We humans are changing the global climate. . . . No nation can escape this danger. None can evade its responsibility to confront it, and we must all do our part."

But when it comes time to do our part, we don't. After all, Clinton warned of the dangers of climate change in 1993, on his first Earth Day in office. In fact, he solemnly promised to make sure that America produced no more greenhouse gases in 2000 than it had in 1990. But he didn't keep his word. The United States will spew an amazing 15 percent more carbon dioxide in 2000 than it did in 1990. It's as if we had promised the Russians that we would freeze our nuclear program and instead built a few thousand more warheads. We broke our word on what history

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may see as the most important international commitment of the 1990s.

What's important to understand is why we broke our word. We did so because Clinton understood that if we were to keep it, we would need to raise the price of fossil fuel. If gasoline cost \$2.50 a gallon, we'd drive smaller cars, we'd drive electric cars, we'd take buses—and we'd elect a new President. We can hardly blame Clinton, or any other politician. His real goal has been to speed the pace of economic growth, which has been the key to his popularity. If all the world's leaders could be gathered in a single room, the one thing that every last socialist, Republican, Tory, monarchist, and trade unionist could agree on would be the truth of Clinton's original campaign admonition: "It's the economy, stupid."

The U.S. State Department had to send a report to the United Nations explaining why we would not be able to keep our Earth Day promise to reduce greenhouse-gas emissions; the first two reasons cited were "lower-than-expected fuel prices" and "strong economic growth." The former senator Tim Wirth, who until recently was the undersecretary of state for global affairs, put it nakedly: the United States was missing its emissions targets because of "more prolonged economic activity than expected."

America's unease with real reductions in fossil-fuel use was clear at last year's mammoth global-warming summit in Kyoto. With utility executives and Republican congressmen stalking the halls, the U.S. delegation headed off

every attempt by other nations to strengthen the accord. And even the tepid treaty produced in Kyoto will meet vigorous resistance if it ever gets sent to the Senate.

Changing the ways in which we live has to be a fundamental part of dealing with the new environmental crises, if only because it is impossible to imagine a world of 10 billion people consuming at our level. But as we calculate what must happen over the next few decades to stanch the flow of CO₂, we shouldn't expect that a conversion to simpler ways of life will by itself do the trick. One would think offhand that compared with changing the number of children we bear, changing consumption patterns would be a breeze. Fertility, after all, seems biological—hard-wired into us in deep Darwinian ways. But I would guess that it is easier to change fertility than lifestyle.

PERHAPS our salvation lies in the other part of the equation—in the new technologies and efficiencies that could make even our wasteful lives benign, and table the issue of our population. We are, for instance, converting our economy from its old industrial base to a new model based on service and information. Surely that should save some energy, should reduce the clouds of carbon dioxide. Writing software seems no more likely to damage the atmosphere than writing poetry.

Forget for a moment the hardware requirements of that new economy—for instance, the production of a six-inch

SOURWOOD

When the keeper has died,
whose hands have touched
so much honey,

the village will convene
to elect a successor
and to remember

the sweetness of his voice,
his dependable hymns,
the spell of smoke

and the hush just after.
While the elders
resist the old rhythms

of grief, one will speak
of the ancient belief—
that the bee-father's demise,

kept secret, could cause
the death of the hives
in the coming winter.

Then the question will rise
in a nervous murmur:
Who will tell the bees?

—R. T. SMITH

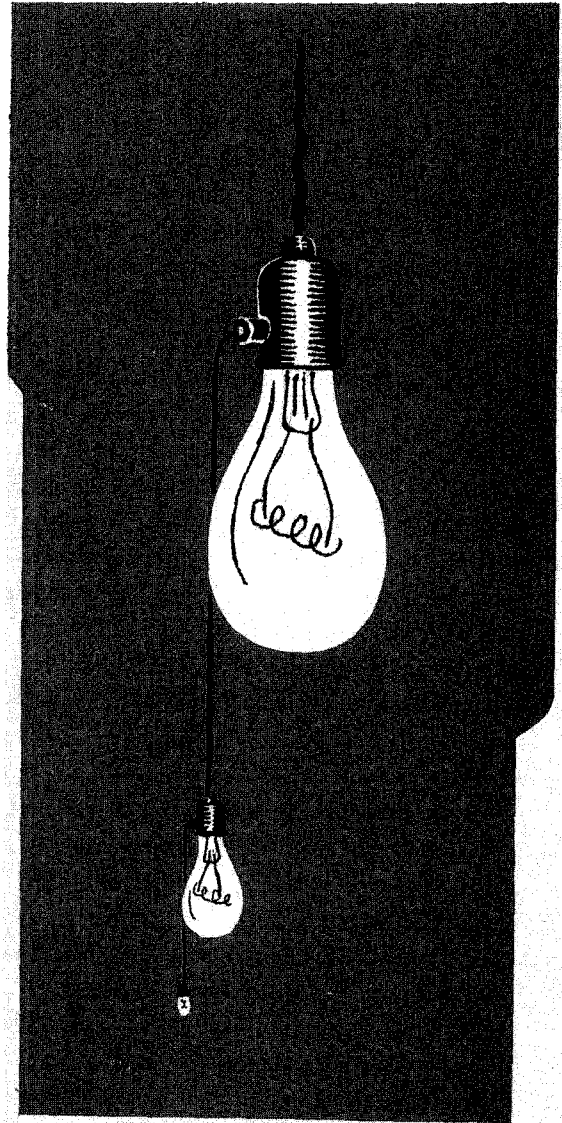
silicon wafer may require nearly 3,000 gallons of water. But do keep in mind that a hospital or an insurance company or a basketball team requires a substantial physical base. Even the highest-tech office is built with steel and cement, pipes and wires. People working in services will buy all sorts of things—more software, sure, but also more sport utility vehicles. As the Department of Energy economist Arthur Rypinski says, “The information age has arrived, but even so people still get hot in the summer and cold in the winter. And even in the information age it tends to get dark at night.”

Yes, when it gets dark, you could turn on a compact fluorescent bulb, saving three fourths of the energy of a regular incandescent. Indeed, the average American household, pushed and prodded by utilities and environmentalists, has installed one compact fluorescent bulb in recent years; unfortunately, over the same period it has also added seven regular bulbs. Millions of halogen torchère lamps have been sold in recent years, mainly because they cost \$15.99 at Kmart. They also suck up electricity: those halogen lamps alone have wiped out all the gains achieved by compact fluorescent bulbs. Since 1983 our energy use per capita has been increasing by almost one percent annually, despite all the technological advances of those years.

As with our homes, so with our industries. Mobil Oil regularly buys ads in leading newspapers to tell “its side” of the environmental story. As the company pointed out recently, from 1979 to 1993 “energy consumption per unit of gross domestic product” dropped 19 percent across the Western nations. This sounds good—it’s better than one percent a year. But of course the GDP grew more than two percent annually. So total energy use, and total clouds of CO₂, continued to increase.

It’s not just that we use more energy. There are also more of us all the time, even in the United States. If the population is growing by about one percent a year, then we have to keep increasing our technological efficiency by that much each year—and hold steady our standard of living—just to run in place. The President’s Council on Sustainable Development, in a little-read report issued in the winter of 1996, concluded that “efficiency in the use of all resources would have to increase by more than fifty percent over the next four or five decades just to keep pace with population growth.” Three million new Americans annually means many more cars, houses, refrigerators. Even if everyone consumes only what he consumed the year before, each year’s tally of births and immigrants will swell American consumption by one percent.

We demand that engineers and scientists swim against that tide. And the tide will turn into a wave if the rest of the world tries to live as we do. It’s true that the average resident of Shanghai or Bombay will not consume as lavishly as the typical San Diegan or Bostonian anytime soon, but he will make big gains, pumping that much more carbon dioxide into the atmosphere and requiring that we cut our



own production even more sharply if we are to stabilize the world’s climate.

The United Nations issued its omnibus report on sustainable development in 1987. An international panel chaired by Gro Harlem Brundtland, the Prime Minister of Norway, concluded that the economies of the developing countries needed to grow five to ten times as large as they



were, in order to meet the needs of the poor world. And that growth won't be mainly in software. As Arthur Rypinski points out, "Where the economy is growing really rapidly, energy use is too." In Thailand, in Tijuana, in Taiwan, every 10 percent increase in economic output requires 10 percent more fuel. "In the Far East," Rypinski says, "the transition is from walking and bullocks to cars. People start out with electric lights and move on to lots of other stuff. Refrigerators are one of those things that are really popular everywhere. Practically no one, with the possible exception of people in the high Arctic, doesn't want a refrigerator. As people get wealthier, they tend to like space heating and cooling, depending on the climate."

In other words, in doing the math about how we're going to get out of this fix, we'd better factor in some unstoppable momentum from people on the rest of the planet who want the very basics of what we call a decent life. Even if we airlift solar collectors into China and India, as we should, those nations will still burn more and more coal and oil. "What you can do with energy conservation in those situations is sort of at the margin," Rypinski says. "They're not interested in fifteen-thousand-dollar clean cars versus five-thousand-dollar dirty cars. It was hard enough to get Americans to invest in efficiency; there's no feasible amount of largesse we can provide to the rest of the world to bring it about."

The numbers are so daunting that they're almost unimaginable. Say, just for argument's sake, that we decided to cut world fossil-fuel use by 60 percent—the amount that the UN panel says would stabilize world climate. And then say that we shared the remaining fossil fuel equally. Each human being would get to produce 1.69 metric tons of carbon dioxide annually—which would allow you to drive an average American car nine miles a day. By the time the population increased to 8.5 billion, in about 2025, you'd be down to six miles a day. If you carpooled, you'd have about three pounds of CO₂ left in your daily ration—enough to run a highly efficient refrigerator. Forget your computer, your TV, your stereo, your stove, your dishwasher, your water heater, your microwave, your water pump, your clock. Forget your light bulbs, compact fluorescent or not.

I'm not trying to say that conservation, efficiency, and new technology won't help. They will—but the help will be slow and expensive. The tremendous momentum of growth will work against it. Say that someone invented a new furnace tomorrow that used half as much oil as old furnaces. How many years would it be before a substantial number of American homes had the new device? And what if it cost more? And if oil stays cheaper per gallon than

bottled water? Changing basic fuels—to hydrogen, say—would be even more expensive. It's not like running out of white wine and switching to red. Yes, we'll get new technologies. One day last fall *The New York Times* ran a special section on energy, featuring many up-and-coming improvements: solar shingles, basement fuel cells. But the same day, on the front page, William K. Stevens reported that international negotiators had all but given up on preventing a doubling of the atmospheric concentration of CO₂. The momentum of growth was so great, the negotiators said, that making the changes required to slow global warming significantly would be like "trying to turn a supertanker in a sea of syrup."

There are no silver bullets to take care of a problem like this. Electric cars won't by themselves save us, though they would help. We simply won't live efficiently enough soon enough to solve the problem. Vegetarianism won't cure our ills, though it would help. We simply won't live simply enough soon enough to solve the problem.

Reducing the birth rate won't end all our troubles either. That, too, is no silver bullet. But it would help. There's no more practical decision than how many children to have. (And no more mystical decision, either.)

The bottom-line argument goes like this: The next fifty years are a special time. They will decide how strong and healthy the planet will be for centuries to come. Between now and 2050 we'll see the zenith, or very nearly, of human population. With luck we'll never see any greater production of carbon dioxide or toxic chemicals. We'll never see more species extinction or soil erosion. Greenpeace recently announced a campaign to phase out fossil fuels entirely by mid-century, which sounds utterly quixotic but could—if everything went just right—happen.

So it's the task of those of us alive right now to deal with this special phase, to squeeze us through these next fifty years. That's not fair—any more than it was fair that earlier generations had to deal with the Second World War or the Civil War or the Revolution or the Depression or slavery. It's just reality. We need in these fifty years to be working simultaneously on all parts of the equation—on our ways of life, on our technologies, and on our population.

As Gregg Easterbrook pointed out in his book *A Moment on the Earth* (1995), if the planet does manage to reduce its fertility, "the period in which human numbers threaten the biosphere on a general scale will turn out to have been much, much more brief" than periods of natural threats like the Ice Ages. True enough. But the period in question happens to be our time. That's what makes this moment special, and what makes this moment hard. ☼

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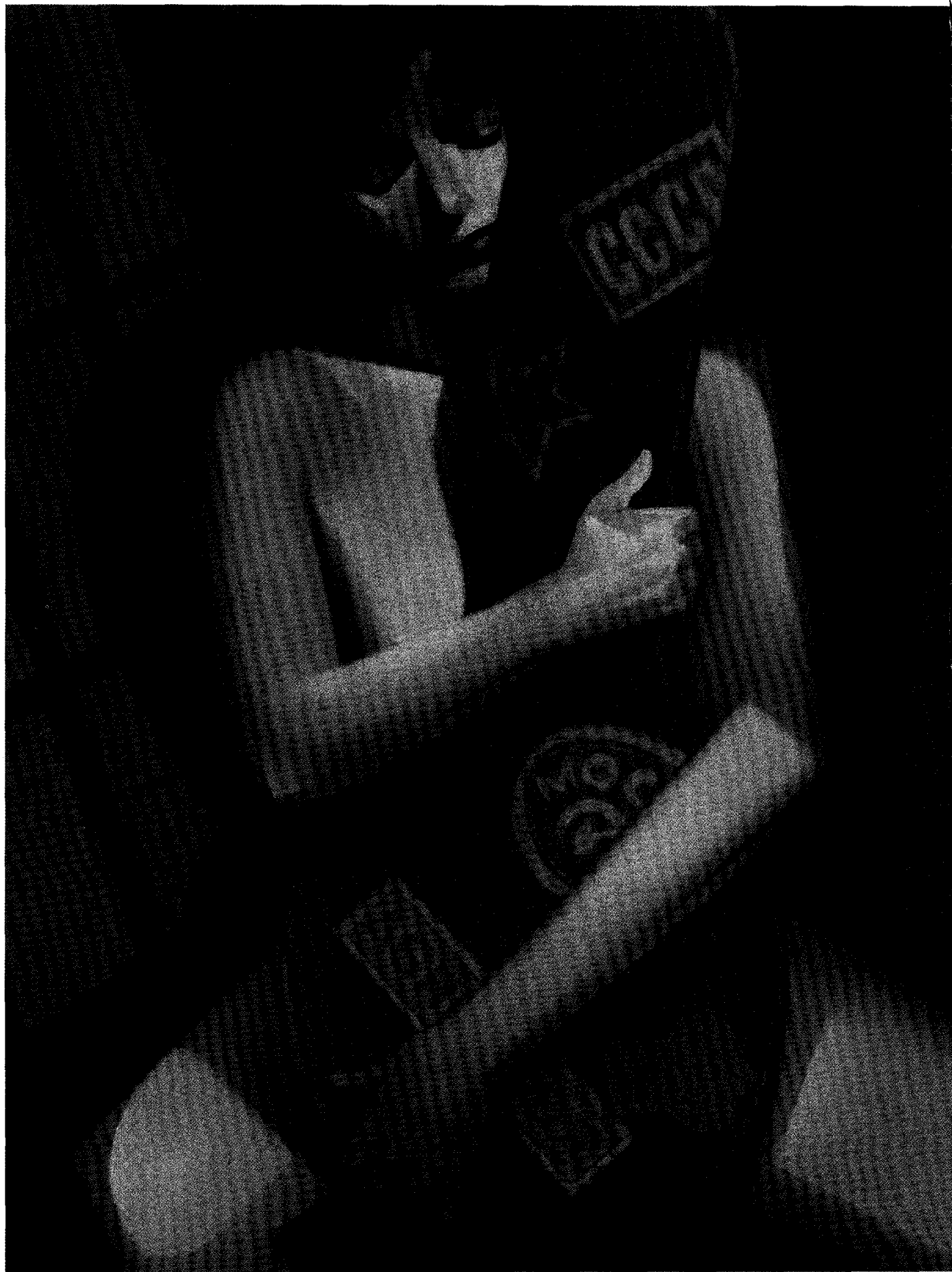
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Licks of Love in the Heart of the Cold War

by JOHN UPDIKE

If a man can't
walk around in his own
country without fear, what
business does he have
selling freedom to the
Russians?

KHRUSHCHEV was in power, or we thought he was, that month I spent as cultural ambassador and banjo-picking bridge between the superpowers, helping to stave off nuclear holocaust. It was September into October of 1964. We had a cultural-exchange program with the Soviets at the time. Our State Department's theory was that almost any American paraded before the oppressed Soviet masses would be, just in his easy manner of walking and talking, such an advertisement for the free way of life that cells of subversion would pop up in his wake like dandelions on an April lawn. So my mission wasn't as innocent as it seemed. Still, I was game to undertake it.

My home lies on the far side of the Blue Ridge in western Virginia, which isn't the same as West Virginia, though it's getting close. Washington, D.C., to me spells "big city," and when the official franked letters began to come through, it never occurred to me to resist something as big and beautiful as the pre-Vietnam U.S. government. Russia is just one more struggling country now, run by economists with sweaty palms, but then it was the dark side of the moon. The

Aeroflot plane from Paris smelled of boiled potatoes, as I recall, and the stewardesses were as hefty as packed suitcases. When we landed, at midnight, we might have been descending over the ocean, there were so few lights under us.

The airport was illuminated dimly, as if by those bedside lamps that hotels give you, not to read by. One of the young soldiers was pawing through a well-worn *Playboy* that some discomfited fur trader had tried to smuggle in, and my first impression of how life worked under communism was the glare of that poor centerfold's sweet bare skin under those brownish airport lights. The magazine was confiscated, but I don't want to believe that the traveling salesman was sent to the gulag. He had a touch of Asia in his cheekbones—it wasn't as if we had corrupted a pure-blooded Russian. The State Department boys swooped me out the customs door into a chauffeured limo that smelled not of boiled potatoes, exactly, but very deeply of tobacco, another natural product. My granddaddy's barn used to smell like that, even after the cured leaf had been baled and sold. I knew I was going to like it here.

On the airport road into Moscow in those days there was this giant billboard of Lenin, leaning forward with a wicked goateed grin and pointing to something up above with a single finger, like John the Baptist pointing to a Jesus we couldn't see yet. "I love that," my chief State Department escort said from the jump seat. "To three hundred million people—'Up yours.'" He was Bud Nevins, cultural attaché. I saw a lot of Bud, Bud and his lovely wife, April, in the weeks to come.

Washington had been an adventure already. I had been briefed on a couple of afternoons by a combination of our experts and some refugees from the Soviet Union. One portly old charmer, who had been upper-middle management in the KGB, filled a whole afternoon around a long leather-topped table by telling me what restaurants to go to and what food to order—smoked sturgeon, piroshki, mushroom pie. His mouth was watering, though from the look of him he hadn't exactly starved under capitalism. Still, no food like home cooking; I could sympathize with that.

Those Washington people loved to party. Each briefing would be followed by a reception, and at one of the receptions a little black-haired coffee fetcher from that afternoon's briefing came up to me as if this time her breasts were being offered on a tray. They were sizable, pert breasts, in a peach-colored cotton chemise that had just outgrown being a T-shirt.

"Sir, you are my god," she told me. That's always nice to hear, and she shouldn't have spoiled it by adding "Except of course for Earl Scruggs. And that nice tall Allen Shelton, who used to fill in on banjo with the Virginia Boys—oh, he was *cute*! Now, have you heard those new sides the McReynoldses have cut down in Jacksonville, with this boy named Bobby Thompson? *He* is the future! He has this whole new style—you can hear the melody! 'Hard Hearted.' 'Dixie Hoedown.' Oh, my!"

"Young lady, you know I'm not exactly bluegrass," I told her politely. "Earl, well, he's beginning to miss notes, but you can't get away from him; he's a giant, and Don Reno likewise. Nevertheless, my idol intellectually is Pete Seeger, if you must know; he's the one, him and the Weavers, brought back the five-string after the war, after the dance bands all but turned the banjo into a ukelele."

"So folksy and *pokey* and phony, if you're asking me," she said, with a hurried overemphasis that I was beginning to get used to, while her warm black eyes darted back and forth on my face like stirred-up horseflies. "And a traitor to his country besides."

"Well," I admitted, "you won't find him on *Grand Ole Opry* real soon, but the college kids eat him up, and for his sheer sincere picking—none of that show-biz flash that sometimes bothers me about Earl. Young lady, you should calm yourself and sit down and listen sometime to those albums Pete cut with Woody and the Almanacs before the war."

"I did," she said eagerly. "I did, I did. 'Talking Union.' 'Sod Buster Ballads.' Wonderful true-blue lefty stuff. The West Coast Communists must have loved it. Mr. Chester, did you ever in your life listen to a program called *Jamboree*, out of Wheeling?"

"Did I? I got my first air time on it, on good old WWVA. Me and Jim Buchanan on fiddle, before he got big. 'Are You Lost in Sin?' and 'Don't Say Good-bye If You Love Me,' with a little 'Somebody Loves You, Darlin'" for a rideout. Did I catch your name, may I ask?"

"You'll laugh. It's a silly name."

"I bet now it isn't. You got to love the name the good Lord gave you."

"It wasn't the good Lord, it was my hateful mother." Momentarily holding a deep breath that rounded out her cheeks like a trumpet player's, she said, "Imogene." Then she exhaled in a blubbery rush and said, "Imogene Frye. Isn't it silly?"

"No," I said. That was my first lie to her. She seemed a little off-center right from the first, but Imogene could talk banjo, and here, in this city of block-long buildings and charcoal suits, that was as welcome to me as borscht and salted cucumber would have been to that homeless KGB colonel, locked out forever as a traitor from the land he loved.

"I *loved*," this Imogene was saying, "the licks you took on 'Heavy Traffic Ahead.' And the repeat an octave higher on 'Walking in Jerusalem Just Like John.'"

"It wasn't an octave, it was a fifth," I told her, settling in and lifting two bourbons from a silver tray that a kindly Negro was carrying around. I saw that this was going to be a conversation. Banjos were getting to be hot then, what with that *Beverly Hillbillies* theme, and I didn't want to engage with any shallow groupie. "Do you ever tune in WDBJ, out of Roanoke?" I asked her. "And tell me exactly why you think this Bobby Thompson is the future."

She saw my hurt, with those hot bright eyes that looked to



oh, the joys

Settle in. And settle down. Then feel the space around you embrace, comfort and ease both body and soul. Before you

of solitary

know it, your entire being has just breathed a collective sigh of relief. And to think, you have yet to make it halfway home.

confinement.



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be all pupil, and hastened to reassure me in her hurried, twitchy way of talking that I was the present, the past, and the future as far as she was concerned. Neither of us, I think, had the habit of drinking, but the trays kept coming around, brought by black men in white gloves, and by the time the reception broke up, the whole scene might have been a picture printed on silk, waving gently in and out. The Iron Curtain experts had drifted away to their homes in Bethesda and Silver Spring, and it seemed the most natural thing in the free world that little Imogene, to whom I must have looked a little wavy myself, would be inviting me back to her apartment somewhere off in one of those neighborhoods where they say it's not safe for a white man to show his face late at night.

BLACK and white, that's most of what I remember. Her hair was black and soft, and her skin was white and soft, and her voice had slowed and gotten girlish with the effects of liquor and being romanced. I was on the floor, peeling down her pantyhose while she rested a hand on the top of my head for balance. Then we were sitting on the bed while she cupped her hands under those sizable breasts, pointing them at me like guns. "I want them to be even bigger," she told me so softly that I strained to hear, "for *you*." Her breasts being appreciated made her smile in the slanted light from the street like a round-faced cartoon character, a cat-and-canary smile. When I carried the courtesies down below, this seemed to startle her, so she stiffened a bit before relaxing her legs. I was striving to keep my focus amid the swaying caused by government-issue alcohol, the jostling of my conscience, my wondering what time it was, and the glinting strangeness of this environment, with its sadness of the single girl. Black and white—her little room sucked dry of color, like something on early TV; her bureau with its brushes and silver-framed photos of the family that had hatched her; an armchair with a cellophane-wrapped drug-store rental book still balanced on one arm, where she had left it before heading off this morning into her working day; her AM-FM-shortwave portable radio, big enough to pick up stations from Antarctica; her narrow bed with its brass headboard that was no good to lean on when we had done our best and needed to reminisce and establish limits.

"Lordy," I said. This was something of a lie, since when the main event came up, I had lost a certain energy to the good times behind us, beginning hours ago at the party. I had felt lost in her.

She touched my shoulder and said my full name tentatively, as if I wouldn't like it: "Eddie Chester." She was right; it sounded proprietary, and something in me bristled. "You really are a god."

"You should catch me sober sometime."

"When?" Her voice pounced, quick and eager, as it had been at first. The pieces of white beside her swollen pupils

glinted like sparkles on TV; her propped-up pillow eclipsed half of her round face and half a head of black hair, mussed out to a wild size.

Mine had been just a manner of speaking. "Not ever, it may be, Imogene," I told her. "I have a week of gigs out west, and then I'm off on this trip, helping to keep your planet safe for democracy."

"But I'll see you when you come back," she insisted. "You must come back to Washington, to be debriefed. Eddie, Eddie, Eddie," she said, as if knowing it galled me. "I can't ever let you go."

I longed for a taxi out of there. "I got a wife, you know. And three little ones."

"Do you love your wife?"

"Well, honey, I wouldn't say I don't, though after fifteen years a little of the bloom rubs off."

"Do you do to her everything you did to me?"

This seemed downright forward. "I forget," I said, and pushed out of the bed into the bathroom, where the switch brought color back into everything, all those pinks and blues and yellows on her medicine-cabinet shelves; it seemed that she needed a lot of pills to keep herself functional.

"Eddie, don't go," she pleaded. "Stay the night. It's not safe out there. It's so bad the taxis won't come even if you call."

"Young lady, I got a hired car coming to the Willard Hotel at seven-thirty tomorrow morning to carry me back to western Virginia, and I'm going to be there. I may not be the future of banjo picking, but I take a real professional pride in never having missed a date." Putting on my underwear, I remembered how the taxi had gone around past the railroad station and then the Capitol, all lit up, and I figured we hadn't gone so far past it that I couldn't steer myself by its tip, or by the spotlights on the Washington Monument.

"Eddie, you *can't* go; I won't let you," Imogene asserted, out of bed except for one sweet, fat white leg caught in the sheet. Her breasts didn't look quite so cocky without her holding them up for me. That's the trouble with a full figure; it ties you to a bra.

I crooned a few lines of "Don't Say Good-bye If You Love Me" until my memory ran out, though I could see Jim Buchanan's face right across from me, squeezed into its fiddle, at the WWVA microphone. And then I told Imogene, as if still quoting a song, "Little darlin', you ain't keeping me here, though I must say it was absolute bliss." This was my third lie, but a white one, and with some truth in it. "Now, you go save your undying affection for an unattached man."

"You'll be killed!" she shrieked, and clawed at me for a while, but I shushed and sweet-talked her back into her bed, fighting a rising headache all the while, and let myself out into the stairwell. The street, one of those numbered ones, was as still as a stage set, but stepping out firmly in my cowboy boots, I headed what I figured was west—you get a sense

of direction growing up in the morning shadow of the Blue Ridge—and, sure enough, I soon caught a peek of the Capitol dome in the distance, white as an egg in an eggcup. A couple of tattered colored gentlemen stumbled toward me from a boarded-up doorway, but I gave them each a dollar and a hearty God bless and strode on. If a man can't walk around in his own country without fear, what business does he have selling freedom to the Russians?

BUD Nevins got me and my banjos—a fine old Gibson mother-of-pearl-trimmed Mastertone and an S. S. Stewart backup whose thumb string always sounded a little punky—into Moscow and put us all to bed in a spare room of the big apartment that he and his wife and three children occupied in the cement warehouse where the Russians stashed free-world diplomatic staff. April Nevins was a long-haired strawberry blonde beginning to acquire the tight, worried expression that the wives of ministers and government officials get, from being saddled with their husbands' careers. You get the pecking-order blues. The bygone summer hadn't done much to refresh her freckles, and a long white winter lay ahead. This was late September, shirtless apple-picking time back home. The puff on the bed they put me in smelled old-fashionedly of flake soap, the way my mother's laundry used to when I helped her carry the wet wash basket out back to the clothesline.

As he put me to bed, Nevins said that something had already come for me in the diplomatic pouch. An envelope lay on my pillow, addressed to me care of the embassy APO number in a scrunched-up hand in black ballpoint. Inside was a long letter from Imogene, recounting her sorrowful feelings after I left and guessing that I was still alive because my death in her neighborhood hadn't been in the papers and she had caught on the radio a plug for an appearance of mine in St. Louis. She recalled some sexual details I had half forgotten and wasn't sure needed to be put down on paper, and promised undying love. I just skimmed the second page. Her words weren't easy to read; the individual letters looked like they wanted to double back on themselves, and I was dog-tired from those thousands of miles I had traveled to reach the dark side of the moon.

Now, I've seen a lot of friendly crowds in the course of my professional life, but I must say I've never seen as many lovable, well-disposed people as I did that month in Russia. They were—at least the ones that weren't in any gulag—full of beans, up all night and bouncy the next morning. The young ones didn't have that shadowy look that American children were taking on, as if dragged out from watching television; these young Russians seemed to be looking directly at life. I hated to think it, but they were unspoiled. Grins poured from the students I played for, in one drafty old classroom after another. Converted ballrooms, many of

them seemed to be. Or not even converted—they just took the dancers and musicians out and moved the desks in. There were dusty moldings and plaster garlands high along the peeling plaster walls, and velvet czarist drapes rotting around a view of some damp little park where old women in babushkas, so gnarled and hunched our own society would have had them on the junk heap, swept the dirt paths with brooms that were just twigs tied to sticks. Everything was still used here.

I had worked up a little talk. I would begin with the banjo as an African instrument, called *banza* in the French colonies of West Africa and *banjer* in the American South, where in some backwaters you could still hear it called that. Slaves played it, and then there were the traveling minstrel shows, in which white performers like Dan Emmett and Joel Walker Sweeney used the traditional black “stroke” or “frailing” or “claw-hammer” style of striking down across the strings with thumb and the back of the index-finger nail (I would demonstrate). Then (still demonstrating) I would tell of the rise of the “finger-picking” or “guitar” style, adding the middle finger and pulling *up* on the strings with metal picks on those three fingers, and end with bluegrass and traditional folk as revived by my hero, Seeger. When I had said all that, in about half an hour, with samples of what we think minstrel banjo sounded like, and some rags from the 1890s, the way Vess L. Ossman and Fred Van Eps left them on Edison cylinders, and a little Leadbelly at the end, they would ask me why Americans oppressed their black people.

I got better at answering that one, as I strummed and picked and rolled through those echoing classrooms. I stopped saying that slavery had been universal not long ago, that the Russians had had their serfs, that several hundred thousand white men from the North had died so that slaves could be free, that a hundred years later civil-rights laws had been passed and lynching had become a rarity. I could tell, as I stood there listening to myself being translated, that I was losing them. What I was saying was too much like what they heard from their own teachers, too much historical inevitability. I simply said yes, it was a problem, a disgraceful problem, but that I honestly believed America was working at it, and music was one of the foremost ways it was working at it. Listening to myself talk, I would sometimes think that the State Department knew what it was doing, bringing a natural patriotic optimist like me over here. Ever since JFK had been shot, my breed had been harder to find. They must have had a pretty fat file on me somewhere: the thought made me uneasy.

I felt best when I played, played as if for a country-fair crowd back home, and those young Russian faces would light up as if I were telling jokes. They had all heard jazz, and even some twist and early rock on tapes that were smuggled through, but rarely anything so jaunty and tinny and jolly, so *irrepressible*, as banjo music going full steam, when

your fingers do the thinking and you listen in amazement yourself. Sometimes they would pair me with a balalaika player, and one little Azerbaijani—I think he had some Gypsy blood—tried my instrument, and I his. We made an act of it for a few days, touring the Caucasus, where old men with beards would gather outside the auditorium windows as if sipping moonshine. When they had me advertised ahead for a formal concert, the crowds were so big that the Soviet controller cut down on the schedule.

The translator who traveled with me kept changing, but usually it was Nadia, a lean, thin-lipped lady over forty who had learned her English during the war, in the military. She had lost two brothers and a fiancé to Hitler, and was wed to the Red system with bonds of iron and grief. She looked like a skinny, tall, stunned soldier boy herself, just out of uniform—no lipstick, a long, white, waxy nose, and a feathery short haircut with gray coming in, not in strands but in

patches. Blank-faced, she would listen to my spiel, give a nod when she'd heard all she could hold, and spout out a stream of this language that was, with all its mushy, twisty sounds, pure music to me. The more she and I traveled together, the better she knew what I was going to say, and the longer she could let me go before translating, and the more I could hear individual words go by, and little transparent phrases through which I seemed to see into her as if into a furnace through a mica window. We traveled on trains in the same compartment, so I could look down from the top bunk and see her hands remove her shoes and her mustard-colored stockings, and then her bare feet and hands flutter out of sight. I would listen, but never heard her breathing relax; she confessed to me toward the end of my stay that she could never sleep on trains. The motion and clicking stirred her up.

An inhibiting factor was Bud Nevins's being in the compartment with us—there were two bunks on two sides—or, if not Bud, another escort from our embassy, and often a fourth, an underling of Bud's or a second escort from the Soviet side, who spoke Armenian or Kazakh or whatever the language was going to be when we disembarked. Sometimes I had more escorts than would fit into one compartment; I think I often got the best night's sleep, with everybody watching everybody else. Nadia was as loyal a Communist as they made, but seemed to need watching anyway. As I got to know her body language, I could tell when we were being crowded, politically speaking.

After a while I tended to bond with the Communists. When we arrived at one of our hinterland destinations, Nadia and her associates would bundle me into a Zil, and then we would share irritation at being tailed by an embassy watchdog in his imported Chevrolet. When we all went south, Bud came along with that willowy, redheaded wife of his. April had, along with her worried look, a plump, pretty mouth a little too full of teeth. For all their three children, they hadn't been married ten years. Out of wifely love and loyalty she wanted to join in what fun the Soviet Union in its sinister vastness offered.

Somewhere in backwoods Georgia we visited a monastery, a showpiece of religious tolerance. The skeleton crew of monks glided around with us in their grim stone rooms. The place had a depressing, stuffy, holy smell—old candle wax and chrism and furniture polish—that I hadn't sniffed for thirty years, and then in the storage closet of a Baptist basement Sunday school. Among the monks with beards down to their bellies was a young one, and I wondered how he had enlisted himself in this ghostly brotherhood. Demented, or a government employee, I decided. He had silky long hair, like a princess captive in a tower, and the sliding onyx eyeballs of a spy. He was one kind of human animal, and I was another, and when we looked at each other, we each repressed a shudder.

PLUNDER

Now that your surgery's
savagery's smoothed over
and the calm you've put on is balm
for all, and in the interstices
between catastrophes you find yourself
enjoying joy;
now that your *why*?
is wisely subsiding, knowing no one
knows why one grows gold
slowly and one's bright green gets torched
overnight;

in this intensely present
tense, in its rush
of cherished perishables, you might splurge
skyward, spreading
your colors in a free fall
never dared before; or
with minimal fanfare slip
into the life you left, the least
predictable most delectable,
in whose midsummer noon you pop
a flip-top in thirst, and think . . .
and though you simply sip,
deeply drink.

—DEBRA BRUCE

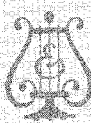
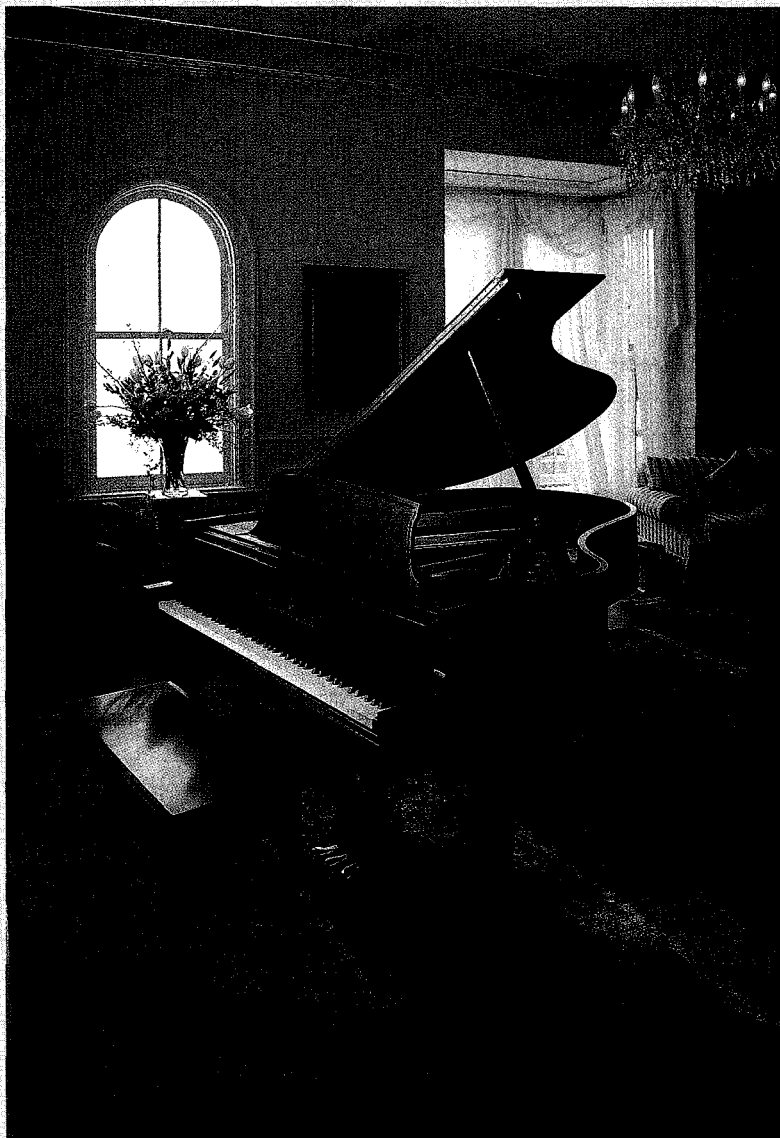
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OUTSIDE, a little crowd of shepherds and sheep, neither group looking any too clean, had gathered around the automobiles, and when Nadia had made our identities and curious mission clear, the shepherds invited us to dine with them, on one of the sheep. I would have settled for some cabbage soup and blini back at the Tbilisi hotel, but the Nevinses looked stricken, as though this chance at authentic ethnicity and bridge-building would never come again, and I suppose it wouldn't have. Their duty was to see that I did my duty, and my duty was clear: consort with the shepherds, scoring points for the free world. I looked toward Nadia, and with one of her unsmiling nods she approved, though this hadn't been on her schedule. Or—who knows?—maybe it had been. By now I saw her as an ally in my mission to subvert the proletariat, no doubt deluding myself.

We climbed for what seemed like a mile and sat down around a kind of campfire, where an ominous big kettle was mulling over some bony chunks of a recently living creature. The shepherds loved April's long ironed hair and the way her round freckled knees peeped out of her skirt as we squatted on our circle of rock perches. After the goatskin of red wine (as stated before, I'm no connoisseur of alcoholic beverages, but this stuff was so rough that flies kept dying in it, and a full swig removed the paint from the roof of your mouth) had been passed a few times, she began to relish their attention, to glow and giggle and switch her long limbs around and come up with her phrases of language-school Russian. Those shepherds—agricultural workers and livestock supervisors was probably how they thought of themselves—had a number of unsolved dental problems, as we saw when their whiskers cracked open in a laugh, but a lot of love hovered around that simmering pot, a lot of desire for international peace. Even Bud took off his jacket and unbuttoned his top shirt button, and Nadia began to lounge back in the scree and translate me loosely, with what I heard as her own original material. The lamb when it came, in tin bowls, could have been mulled somewhat longer, and was mixed with what looked like crabgrass, roots and all, and some little green capers that each had a firecracker inside, but as it turned out, only the Nevinses got sick. Next day they had to stay in their hotel room with the shades lowered while the Communists and I motored out to entertain at a Peoples' War veterans home with a view of Mount Elbrus. The way we all cackled in the car at the expense of the Nevinses and their tender capitalist stomachs was the cruelest thing I saw come to pass in my month in the Soviet Union.

Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan: you wondered why God ever made so much wasteland in the world, with a gold dome or a blue lake now and then as a sop to the thirsty soul. But here's where the next revolution was coming from, it turned out—out from under those Islamic turbans. When my banjo flashed mother-of-pearl their way, they made the split-

finger sign to ward off the evil eye. They knew a devil's gadget when they saw it.

Whenever I showed up back in Moscow, I was solemnly handed packets of letters in Imogene's cramped black hand, pages and pages and pages of them. I couldn't believe the paper she wasted, and the abuse of taxpayer money involved in using the diplomatic pouch. She had heard me take an eight-bar vocal break on my Decca cut of "Somebody Loves You, Darlin'," on a station out of Charlottesville, and had decided that it was a code to announce that I was leaving my wife for her. "I am altogether open and YOURS, my dearest DEAREST Eddie," she wrote, if I can remember one sentence in all that trash. "I will wait for as LONG as it takes, though KINGDOM COME in the meantime," if I can recall another. Then on and on, with every detail of what she did each day, with some about her internal workings that I would rather not be told, though I was happy she had her period, and all about her unhappiness (that I wasn't there with her) and hopefulness (that I soon would be), and her theory that I was in the air talking to her all the time, broadcasting from every frequency on the dial, including the shortwave that brought in stations from the Caribbean and Western Europe. If she caught Osborne and Martin doing "My Lonely Heart" or "You'll Never Be the Same," she knew that I was their personal friend and had asked them to send her a private message—never mind that they had recorded it in the early fifties. I couldn't do more than skim a page here and there; the handwriting would get smaller and scrunchier and then blossom out into some declaration of love printed in capitals and triple underlined. Just the envelopes, the bulky white tumble of them, were embarrassing me in front of Bud Nevins and the whole embassy staff, embattled here in the heartland of godless communism. How could I be a cultural ambassador shouldering this ridiculous load of puling, mewling, conceited infatuation?

Imogene was planning where we would live, how she would dress for her seat of honor at my concerts, what she would do for me in the bedroom and the kitchen to keep my love at its present sky-high pitch. Thinking we were in for a lifetime together, she filled me in on her family—her mother, whom she had maligned but who wasn't all bad, and her father, who was scarcely in her life enough to mention, and her brothers and sisters, who sounded like the worst pack of losers and freeloaders on the Delmarva Peninsula. My fear was that her outpourings would not escape the vigilance of the KGB, x-raying the diplomatic pouch. I would lose face with Nadia, that steely exemplar of doing without. The innocent-eyed gymnasium students would sense my contamination. The homely austerity of Soviet life, with that undercurrent of fear left over from Stalin, made the amorous delusions of this childish American woman repulsive to me. As my month approached its end and the capitalist world was putting out feelers to reclaim me, Imogene's

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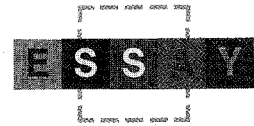


PRIZEWINNERS

- 1ST - Dana Stevens**
University of California
- 2ND - Jonathan Fink**
Syracuse University
- 3RD - Arlitia Jones**
University of Alaska

HONORABLE MENTION

- Gina Clark**
Arizona State University
- Jane R. Shippen**
University of Virginia
- Eleanor Stanford**
New College of the University of South Florida
- Beth Ann Fennelly**
University of Arkansas
- De Anne Lyn Smith**
Alfred University
- J. Elizabeth Clark**
Binghamton University
- Ilya Kaminsky**
Georgetown University
- Rachel Trousdale**
Yale University
- Dreya L. Johannsen**
University of Texas
- Eugene Ostashevsky**
Stanford University
- . . .

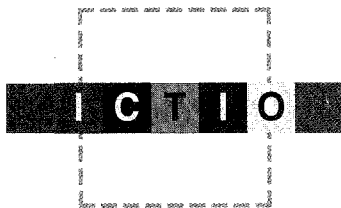


PRIZEWINNERS

- 1ST - Pamela McElwee**
Yale University
- 2ND - Alexander Parsons**
New Mexico State University
- 3RD - Juno Lamb**
University of New Hampshire

HONORABLE MENTION

- Katherine Harper**
Bowling Green State University
- Kim Todd**
University of Montana
- Loren Brody and Sarah Rogers**
Yale University, University of North Carolina
- Wendy Reed Bruce**
University of Alabama
- Toby F. Sonneman**
Western Washington University
- Kimberly N. Johnson**
Rice University
- Margo Wixsom**
Western Washington University
- . . .



PRIZEWINNERS

- 1ST - Margo Rabb**
University of Arizona
- 2ND - Wendy Mai Rawlings**
University of Utah
- 3RD - Emily Hall**
Columbia University

HONORABLE MENTION

- Allison Amend**
University of Iowa
- Deborah O. Unferth**
Syracuse University
- Bridget Rohan Garrity**
University of Iowa
- Kate Small**
San Francisco State University
- Bonnie Jo Campbell**
Western Michigan University
- Bret Anthony Johnston**
Miami University
- Anna Ziegler**
Yale University
- . . .

crazy stuff got mixed in with businesslike communications from my agent and colorless but friendly letters from my wife with notes and dutiful drawings from my children enclosed. This heightened my disgust and helpless indignation. I would have sent a cable—CUT IT OUT, or YOU AIN'T NO BLUE-EYED SWEETHEART OF MINE—but by some canniness of her warped mind she never gave a return address, and when I tried to think of her apartment, all I got was that black-and-white feeling: the way she fed me her breasts one at a time, the very big radio, and the empty street with the Capitol at the end like a white-chocolate candy. I had simply to endure it, this sore humiliation.

THEY had saved Leningrad for me to the last, since it was where the Communists, still remembering the siege, were the toughest, and I might run into the most hostility from an audience. But as soon as my Gibson began talking, the picked strings all rolling like the synchronized wheels, big and little, of the *Wabash Cannonball*, the smiles of mutual understanding would start breaking out. I am not a brave man, but I have faith in my instrument and in people's decent instincts. St. Petersburg, as we call it again, is one beautiful city, a Venice where you least expect it, all those big curved buildings in Italian colors. The students in their gloomy old ballrooms were worried about Goldwater getting elected, and I told them that the American people would never elect a warmonger. I was always introduced as a "progressive" American folk artist, but I had to tell them that there wasn't much progressive about me—my folks had been lifelong Democrats, because of a war fought a hundred years ago, and I wasn't going to be the one to change parties.

Then, just as I was about to get back onto Aeroflot, Khrushchev was pushed out of power, and all the Soviets around me tightened up, wary of what was going to happen next. This whole huge empire was run out of some back rooms by a few beetle-browed men. Nadia—my voice, my guide, my protector, closer to me for this month than a wife, because I couldn't have done without her—complimented me by confiding, somewhere out on the Nevsky Prospekt, or in some hallway where no bugs were likely to be placed, "Eddie, it was not civilized. It was not done how a civilized country should do things. We should have said 'Thank you very much for ending the terror.' And then 'You are excused—too much adventurism, okay, failures in agricultural production, and et cetera. Okay, so long, but *bolshoi* thanks.'"

At moments, toward the end of a long public day in, say, Tashkent, her English would deteriorate, out of sheer wear-

iness from drawing on two sets of brain cells, and her eyelids and the tip of her long white nose would get pink. We would say goodnight in the hotel lobby, with its musty-attic smell and lamps whose bases were brass bears, and she would give me in her handshake not the palm and the meat of the thumb but four cool fingers, aligned like a sergeant's stripes. That was the way we began to say good-bye in the airport, until we leaped the gulf between our two great countries and I kissed her on one cheek and then the other and hugged her, in proper Slavic style. Her eyes teared up, but it may have been just the start of a cold.

Bud told me in the airport, so casually that I should have smelled trouble, "We took you off the APO number two days ago, so your mail won't show up here after you leave. It will be forwarded to your home."

"Sounds reasonable," I said, not thinking.

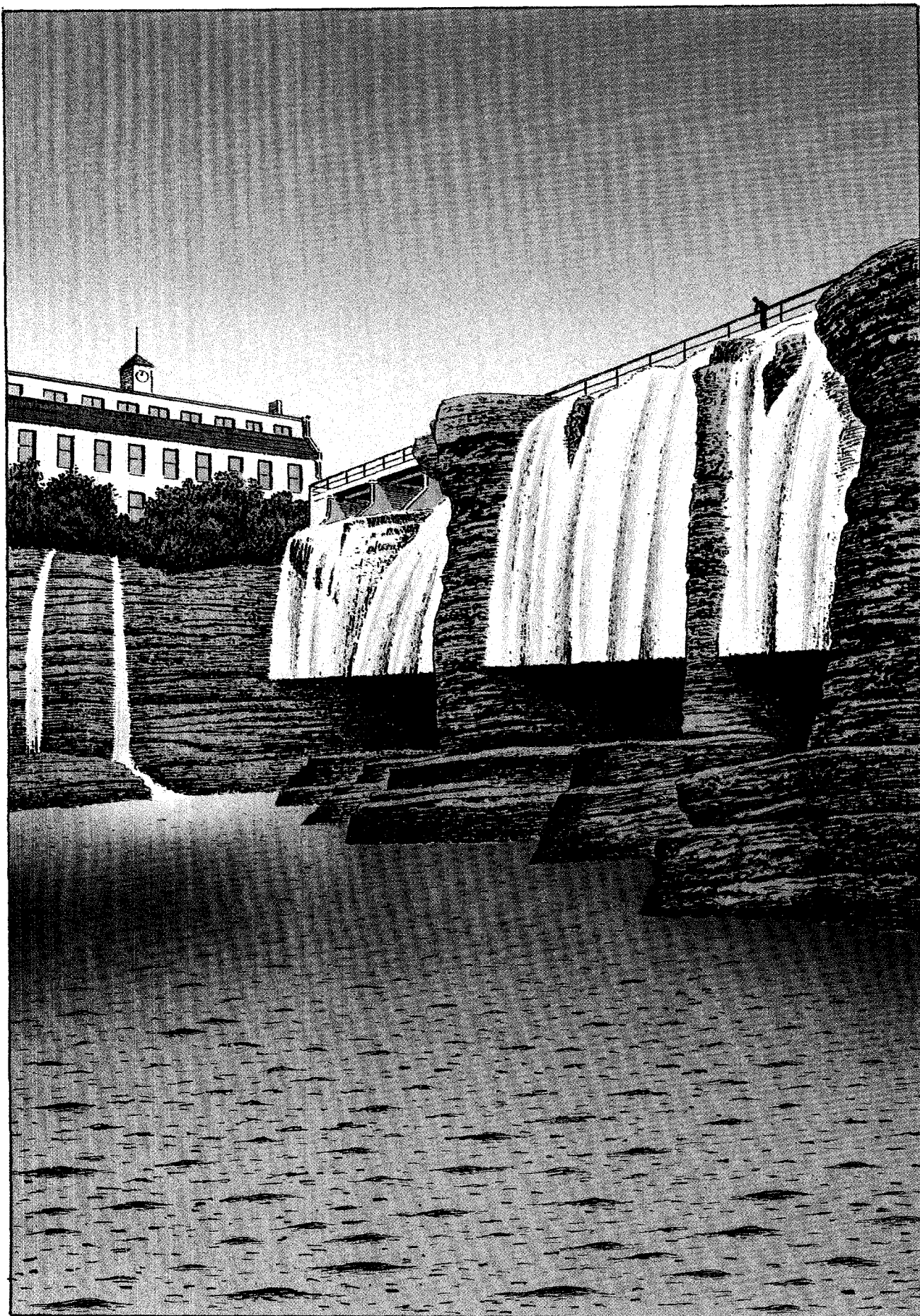
Coming back, on the last leg, out of Paris, I had an experience such as I've never had again in all my miles of flying. We came down on the big arc over Gander and Nova Scotia and from five miles up I could see New York, hundreds of miles away, a little blur of light in the cold plastic oval of the plane window which grew and grew, like a fish I was pulling in. My cheek got cold against the plastic as I pressed to keep the light in view, a spot on the invisible surface of the earth like a nebula, like a dust mouse, only glowing, the fuzzy center of our heavenly liberty. Just it and me, there in the night sky, communing. It was a vision.

After I cleared customs at Kennedy, I phoned home, though it was after ten o'clock. I was so happy to be in the land of the free. My wife answered with something in her voice besides welcome, like a fearful salamander under a big warm rock. "Some letters for you came today and yesterday," she said. "All from one person, it looks like."

How bright this airport was, I thought, compared with the one in Moscow. Every corner and rampway was lit as harshly as a mug shot. The place was packed with advertisements and snack bars, sizzling with electricity. "Did you open them?" I asked, my heart suddenly plunked by a heavy hand.

"Just one," she said. "That was enough, Eddie. Oh, my."

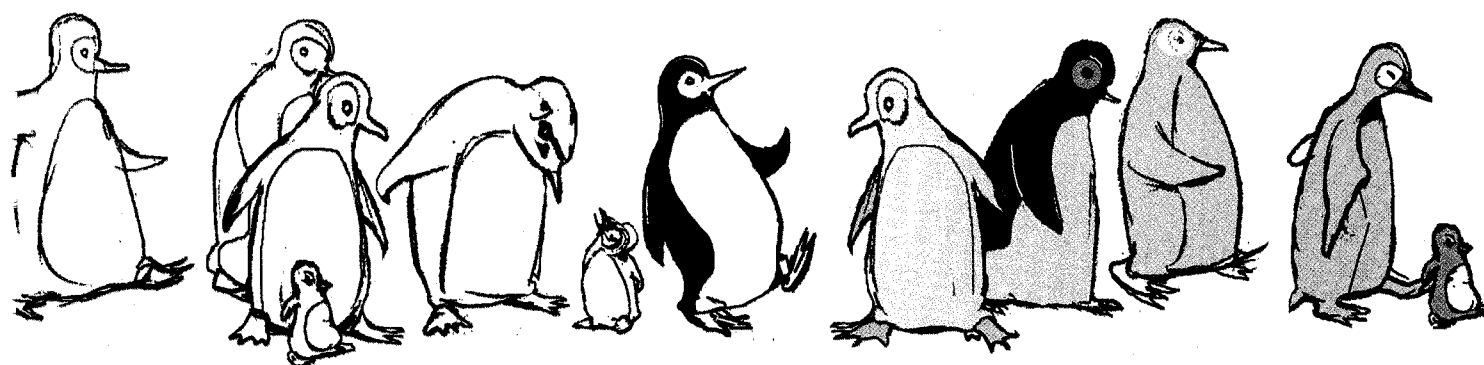
"It wasn't anything," I began, which wasn't a hundred percent true. For though I was very unhappy with Imogene for making what looked to be an ongoing mess, you can't blame a person for thinking you're a god. You have to feel a spark of fondness, remembering the way she held up one breast and then the other, each nipple looking in that black-and-white room like the hole of a gun barrel pointed straight at your mouth. You can go to the dark side of the moon and back and see nothing more wonderful and strange than the way men and women get together. ☯



PHOTOGRAPHY IN THE AGE OF FALSIFICATION

by KENNETH BROWER

The wildlife photography we see in films, books, and periodicals is often stunning in its design, import, and aesthetics. It may also be fake, enhanced or manufactured by emerging digital technologies that have transformed—some say contaminated—the photography landscape



PRESTIDIGITATION

THIRTY years ago, in the age before the cruise ships came, I spent four months in the Galápagos Islands with the photographer Eliot Porter. The Galápagos were wilder, less-visited islands then. They had yet to become the most photographed archipelago on earth. Porter was making the pictures, and I was gathering notes, for the first volume in what would become a vast library, that ponderous collection of large-format Galápagos books now decorating coffee tables everywhere. Porter, our first great master of nature photography in color, was then sixty-four, the grand old man of his art. I was twenty-one,

just beginning a career that was to be spent in large part outdoors in the company of nature photographers. Among my duties in the Galápagos were helping to lug Porter's 4X5 camera and tripod up volcanoes, rowing dories in through surf, and hunting meat, like Robinson Crusoe, on various islands with our guide's old bolt-action .22. It was one of the best times of my life.

Accompanying our expedition was Tad Nichols, a former Disney cameraman, and in the islands we crossed paths with the British nature photographer Alan Root, then just beginning his own remarkable career. In the Galápagos I had my first opportunity to study the habits of cameramen in the wild.

Anchored off Santiago Island one evening, over a dinner of

feral goat, the photographers grew expansive and the talk turned to nature fakery. Porter was a purist. He believed in shooting straight. He admitted to having occasionally moved a stone or feather or piece of driftwood to improve one of his compositions, but he was generally opposed to this sort of manipulation, and he grew uneasy talking about it. Root and Nichols came from a more pragmatic, rough-and-tumble school of commercial nature photography. Root told us the story of a *Life* cover a colleague had done. The image had begun in the mind of one of the magazine's editors. By a kind of redactional clairvoyance this editor, seated comfortably at his desk in Manhattan, had seen it all clearly: leopard and its kill in thorn tree, branches framing a setting sun. The photographer set off in quest of this vision, traveling the East African savanna for weeks with a captive leopard, killing antelopes, draping the carcasses in the branches of various thorn trees, and cajoling the leopard to lie proudly on the "kill," a tableau that the photographer shot against a succession of setting suns. Tad Nichols laughed ruefully yet appreciatively. He told the story of his own work on Disney's *The Living Desert*, most of which was filmed on ersatz dunes

built on a vast sound-stage table. Root countered with a story of some clever photoduplicity, the details of which I have since forgotten. Nichols came back with a tale of how Disney's minions bulldozed lemmings off cliffs for the famous lemming-suicide sequence.

And so it went, confession piling on confession. Both Root and Nichols affected a sad cynicism about the unseemly things they were called upon to do, but underneath, clearly, was a grifter's glee at various con jobs well executed—and under *that*, if I am not mistaken, was a soupçon of genuine shame. At twenty-one, I was scarcely weaned from the Disney nature documentaries. I particularly remember one revelation of how Uncle Walt's men had fabricated the hawk-kills-flying-squirrel episode. (Assistant grip stands on tall stepladder with pouch of flying squirrels. Grip tosses squirrels—unpaid rodent extras—skyward one by one, as in skeet shoot, until trained hawk, after dozens of misses, finally gets it right.)

Photofakery, then, is nothing new. The first attempts at it no doubt followed shortly upon Daguerre's initial success with his camera obscura. But photography of late has en-



tered a brave new epoch. No photographer today would bother cruising the bush with trained leopards to fake a sunset shot. Anyone with Adobe Photoshop (\$589 when I last checked; \$599 with a scanner thrown in) could find a perfectly adequate leopard in the zoo, digitally edit out the bars of the cage, tree the cat with subtle movements of mouse, bloodlessly procure a dead antelope (if his computer held any in files), and then set the whole collage against a virtual setting sun. Indeed, he could tree his leopard against the rings of Saturn if he was so inclined. A leopard can't change his spots, but the modern photographer can easily do it for



Top, the original photograph; bottom, the digitally altered version from Art Wolfe's *Migrations*

him. With some of the applications now available to filmmakers, the photographer could arrange for the leopard to lose a fight with John Wayne, or to dance with Fred Astaire, who has been shown dancing with a vacuum cleaner in a recent television commercial.

"In a strict sense photography can never be abstract, for the camera is incapable of synthetic integration," Ansel Adams wrote in 1932. Synthetic integration, unimaginable sixty-five years ago by one of the art's great technicians, is now full upon us. The old magic is fast becoming a kind of prestidigitation.

More and more digitally doctored images are appearing in the media. The trend alarms a number of photographers. It

worries certain editors, and it worries me. I am troubled not only as a colleague—a nonfiction writer whose text often runs alongside photographs of wild lands and wildlife—but also as a casual student of the history of nature photography, an admirer of the art, and a friend of many who practice it. I have shared tents and blinds and small boats and even the mouthpieces of scuba regulators with these people. I love them for their hardiness, their courage, and their constant griping about the weather, sticky shutters, leaky housings, bad strobes, native customs, the myopia of photo editors, and the intransigence of wild animals. I am always impressed by their skill at improvisation in the field. I admire—to a certain extent—their ingenuity. But it is clear to me that the photographer's work philosophy is not always congruent with the expectations of those of us who view the work. Too few photographers, I think, appreciate how directly the new technology aims at the heart of the credibility that distinguishes this art form from others.

The controversy over digital manipulation has been simmering for some time. It first surfaced in 1982, when *National Geographic* ran a computer-altered photo of the Pyramids at Giza on its cover. To the traditional adjustments of reality that the photographer had already made—shooting with a telephoto lens to exaggerate the scale of the Pyramids and persuading three camel riders to pass a second time before those great tombs—the magazine's editors added a new one: digitally moving the camels backward a few paces.

In 1991 the board of directors of the National Press Photographers Association (NPPA), noting that emerging electronic technology enabled "the manipulation of the content of an image in such a way that the change is virtually undetectable," adopted a statement of principle: "As journalists we believe the guiding principle of our profession is accuracy; therefore, we believe it is wrong to alter the content of a photograph in any way that deceives the public."

The North American Nature Photography Association has yet to agree on any principle so strong. Many NANPA members feel that they have a poetic license broader than the one issued to their cousins, the photojournalists of the NPPA. Still, at the first Annual Nature Photography Forum, held by NANPA in 1994, the ethics session was dominated by fierce debate on the issues of nature photography in commercial game farms and of digital manipulation. Tom Mangelsen, a wildlife photographer from Jackson, Wyoming, lamented the new trends and tallied the damage they had caused the profession: the loss of incentive to compete in the wild, the loss of the sense of adventure, the loss of pride in one's work, and the loss of the public's respect for wildlife photography.

Art Wolfe, a nature photographer based in Seattle, was the first in the crowd to respond. "We're living in an age of back-swinging toward conservative ethics," Wolfe said. "Whenever I hear the word 'ethics,' it raises the hair on the back of my neck. The point here is that we all have different

standards. I certainly don't want to be told by somebody else what I should be doing."

The debate intensified in 1996, when exposés in *The Denver Post* and the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* revealed how Wolfe's 1994 book *Migrations* had been fabricated. In about a third of the book's images the wildlife—caribou, zebra, geese, greater sandhill cranes—had been digitally enhanced, and some had been digitally cloned and multiplied.

"Nature photographs are generally accepted as and trusted to be straightforward records of what the photographer witnessed and recorded on film in a single instant," the photographer Gary Braasch wrote in a letter to the NANPA ethics committee in June of 1996, as the debate over *Migrations* culminated in the camera magazines. "This is an acceptance hallowed by years of communication among photographers, editors, publishers, and viewers."

The fact is that this acceptance has often been "hallowed" in the breach. As the advocates of digital doctoring like to point out, the old boys faked it too.

Recently I checked my recollections of Eliot Porter with John Rohrbach, the associate curator of photographs at the Amon Carter Museum, in Fort Worth, and the custodian of the Eliot Porter collection there. Rohrbach confirmed my impression that Porter did not believe in setups but was sometimes tempted. He corroborated my sense that Porter was uneasy discussing the matter. "We actually have a picture of him hacking away at a cactus to get a picture of a roadrunner nest," Rohrbach said. "Paul Strand was even more adamant that no retouching at all should occur. But there are prints where Strand drew in manholes or etched out people to balance his compositions."

In his first years of printing his most famous photograph, *Moonrise, Hernandez, New Mexico, 1941*, Ansel Adams, in his words, "allowed some random clouds in the upper sky area to show." They always annoyed him, and in the 1970s he arranged in the darkroom for those clouds to evaporate. In his celebrated *Winter Sunrise, The Sierra Nevada From Lone Pine, California*, Adams deleted from the dark foothills of the middle ground the big "LP" that the little town's high school students had laid out in whitewashed stones.

This image of the Sierra at sunrise—distant horse grazing beneath a horizon of bare aspens in sunlight; dark, unblemished foothills in shadow; and finally the bright, jagged cordillera of the Sierra in sunlight—opens *This Is the American Earth*, the first volume of the "exhibit-format series" that my father, David Brower, began in 1960 at the Sierra Club. Under my father's editorship the series eventually grew to thirty volumes, thirteen of which I wrote or edited. As a fourteen-year-old, well before my father thought to press me into service, I watched *This Is the American Earth* come together at Adams's house in San Francisco. The creative excitement among the three principal contributors—Adams, my father, and Nancy Newhall, the author of the

text—was a wonderful thing to behold until the martinis kicked in, always derailing Newhall first. I remember the print of *Lone Pine* on Adams's table. I have a vague recollection that the photographer was less than proud of having excised the "LP." My father recalls otherwise—that Adams simply thought the town's initials messed up his picture and he wanted them out of there.

In 1964, taking a kind of sabbatical after my freshman year at Berkeley, I assembled my first exhibit-format book, a photo essay on California's Big Sur coast. Early in the editing I worked for two weeks out of Adams's new house in Carmel Highlands. By day I collected the work of the several photographic geniuses resident along that shore. By night, back at Adams's house, I watched the maestro "dodge and burn" in his darkroom. To dodge—to withhold light from an area of the print for a timed period in the developing process—was once considered, as the term suggests, somewhat underhanded, but it had long since become accepted practice. The same was true of burning, or concentrating light on an area of the print. Adams's darkroom, then just two years old, was state-of-the-art. He had designed it to produce mural-size prints. The enlarging camera was huge, like a Brownie from Brobdingnag. The bellows on the thing would have worked for Vulcan at his forge.

Mounted on rails, the camera faced a rail-mounted easel holding the print paper. Adams wore a blue apron that protected everything but the turquoise-and-silver clasp of his string tie. Working over the nascent print, Adams would aim his great deviant beak at it appraisingly. (He had broken his nose when he was four years old, in the San Francisco quake of 1906, which had thrown him against a garden wall. In crushing his septum, the great earthquake was also responsible, I have always assumed, for the strange adenoidal quality of his voice.) His fingers, gnarled by arthritis, would hold the dodging wand. Making little incantatory circles with the wand over the area he wanted lightened, he would laugh his crazy, nasal, Mephistophelian laugh.

THE PUBLIC AND

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It was all white magic, I can't help thinking. The small adjustments to reality that occurred in Ansel Adams's darkroom, if crimes at all, were misdemeanors. That photographs should be "straightforward records of what the photographer witnessed and recorded on film in a single instant" still seems a worthy ideal, despite the fact that some of our greatest have stretched and jiggered it. Many fine principles are hallowed in the breach. This does not mean that they exert no influence, or that we should dispense with them entirely.

SHEPHERD

MOST of my commerce with photographers has been in the field, not in the darkroom. Digitalization overtook photography some time ago, but I have been a Rip Van Winkle in this matter—if not exactly asleep for twenty years, then inattentive for about that period. To bring myself up to speed, I called at the photography studio of Joseph Holmes, in Kensington, California. Holmes is an old friend whose heroes are my heroes. "Ansel Adams, Eliot Porter, Edward Weston," he says. "A little Brett Weston. Monet. Van Gogh. O'Keeffe. Thomas Moran." Holmes is a consummate and obsessive printmaker, in the tradition of Adams, and he has a Porterlike eye for composition. He has published several books of photographs, among them the exquisite *Natural Light* (a promising title, in view of my prejudices),

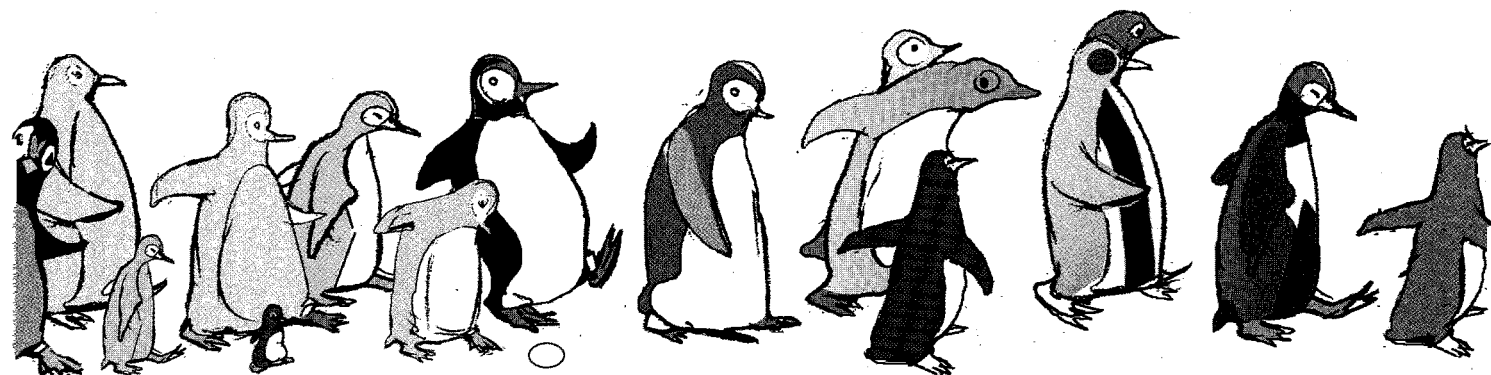
through the pages. "Engineering manuals for hard drives. It's ridiculous." Opening to a diagram, he thrust it at me. "Here's how you should cool the hard drive. I like to read about stuff like this when my hard drives die from overheating. It's horrible when your hard drive dies on you."

Closing the curtain on the window above his computer monitor, Holmes sat at the keyboard. I offered to close the side door as well, which stood half open to the sunlit yard outside. For a moment Holmes seemed baffled by this suggestion. No need, he said, after an awkward pause. The color out there—the warm light on the concrete—was hardly the sort that would interfere with the fidelity of the colors on the screen.

With a stylus on a Wacom ArtZ tablet in his lap, Holmes summoned an image: *Lily pads, Reelfoot Lake, Tennessee, 1979*.

If these lilies had begun as homage to Monet, Holmes had managed to put his own stamp on them. In Monet's Giverny lilies, on canvas after canvas, the life is in the colors of sky and vegetation reflected on the water. In Holmes's Tennessee lilies the reflected sky is colorless—a luminous gray—and all the life is in the verdant topography of the pads and in the gems of dew on them. If the eye stops anywhere in the Holmes picture, it is on a great, glittering Hope Diamond of dew cupped in the green tureen of the largest pad.

"In this special format there are two hundred and eighty-five megabytes in the image of lilies," Holmes said. "There



yet he has thrown himself completely into digitalization.

Holmes's downstairs workroom did not look like any darkroom I remembered. It held no red light, no developing trays. A scanner and ink-jet printers of various sorts lay atop a large table in the middle of the room. Stacks of books, manuals, and papers overspilled the table and completely covered the floor, except where Holmes had cleared a narrow corridor to his computer. "My curse is perfectionism," he had once admitted to me. As we picked our way through the room, I realized that this curse was confined to his printmaking. It has not yet afflicted his housekeeping. He lifted a book to clear a chair for me.

"I wind up reading stuff like this," he said, flipping

were two ten in the original format. A two-ten-meg file—that's seventy million image pixels. A very large number of little squares." Here, too, Holmes diverged from the master. Claude Monet was no pointillist. He liked to load up his brush. In the most detailed of Monet's lily ponds the number of brushstrokes falls well short of 70 million.

Holmes proceeded to deconstruct his lilies. With light touches of stylus on pad he instructed the computer to open an image with lots of edit layers and then to peel away layers. As he removed each layer, a kind of shiver traveled through the image. It was ominous, somehow, as if a gust of ill wind had blown across Reelfoot Lake. The lilies would darken or lighten imperceptibly. The edges of the pads

would shift and refocus in subtle, indescribable ways. These tiny metamorphoses caused me to consider the great mystery of how the world—its shapes and colors—looks to others. The computer, it seemed, was trying to solve the mystery—to educate the solipsist in me. This was like gazing at Reelfoot Lake through a succession of different corneas.

"I'm turning off the upper layers so we can move quickly into the picture, just to give you an idea how many pixels there are in this image," Holmes said. "This is one magnification factor of two."

The computer enlarged a section of the image that Holmes had selected. Like a detail from a painting, the fragment—a single lily pad, and the pad's dark shadow on the water, and the bright water beneath the shadow's curving edge—became more interesting than the totality of the canvas.

"Here's a second factor of two."

We were plummeting headlong into the lily pad, it seemed, but Holmes apologized for the slowness of our journey. He explained that the computer was reading the compressed image, decompressing it on the fly, and displaying it on the screen.

"A third factor of two," he said.

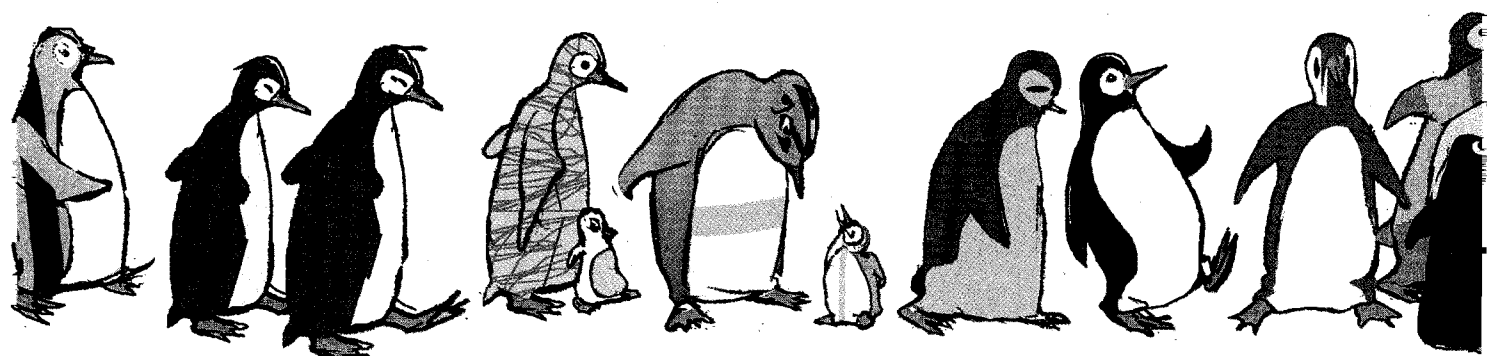
We were plunging now into the darkness of the lily's shadow, and I found myself, contrary to all expectation, very excited. I had come prepared to dislike everything about digitalization, but I loved this sensation of being pulled into the

"A fifth factor of two."

"Oh, my goodness," I heard myself say. It sounded awfully prim, like something Dorothy would cry on her departure from Kansas. I was pixilated and pixelated. Another few factors of two, I calculated, and we would be probing the atomic structure of Reelfoot Lake. The darkness of the lily-shadowed water would soon flicker with the dance of electrons and quarks.

"I could change one pixel in the image," Holmes said. "I have infinite control. This is a small part of the picture, and you still don't see any little squares. The trick in digital imaging is always to have more than enough pixels to not see them." He added that if necessary he could build something called a ramp within an individual pixel. "You can dodge and burn the tiniest thing. When you have access to complete digital control, then you can get total tonal control."

He gave me a sidelong glance and then delivered an apostasy. "I don't know if you've ever gone back and looked at Ansel's stuff. At the Ansel Adams Center, in San Francisco, they have a collection of his prints on permanent display, all dated from the early seventies. I looked at them recently, and I was shocked. They're miserable compared with recent reproductions, because the reproductions were done on a drum scanner that gave tonal control sufficient to add separation to the highlights and to the shadows. Photography has a terrible problem with highlights and shadows. It's one of the big rea-



microcosm. The fascination at the core of Antonioni's movie *Blow-Up* was all here in Reelfoot Lake.

"A fourth factor of two."

Each time we lurched deeper into the picture, the image on the screen, though it could only be accidental now, continued to look composed. The arrangement looked intentional. What is the magic in the frame? In any frame? The simple act of framing with the hands, or a viewfinder, or a computer screen, causes a scene to jump out at us. Throw a frame around almost anything, and the elements within try to harmonize. Composition resides more in nature, maybe, and in the effort of the viewer, than it does in the sensibilities of photographers and artists.

sons why photographs look like photographs. Highlights are washed out, usually, and shadows are black—"the soot and the chalk" that Ansel used to rail against. That's not the way the world really looks."

Holmes's favorite piece of two-dimensional art is not a photograph but an oil on canvas, a Van Gogh painting of olive orchards. The richness of the Van Gogh, which Holmes first saw on loan at the National Gallery, stunned and overwhelmed him. Renoir's *The Luncheon of the Boating Party* drives him insane, he says. Renoir's ability to explore details in his shadows far exceeds anything a photographer could do.

"Most people are oblivious of the way their eyes work,"



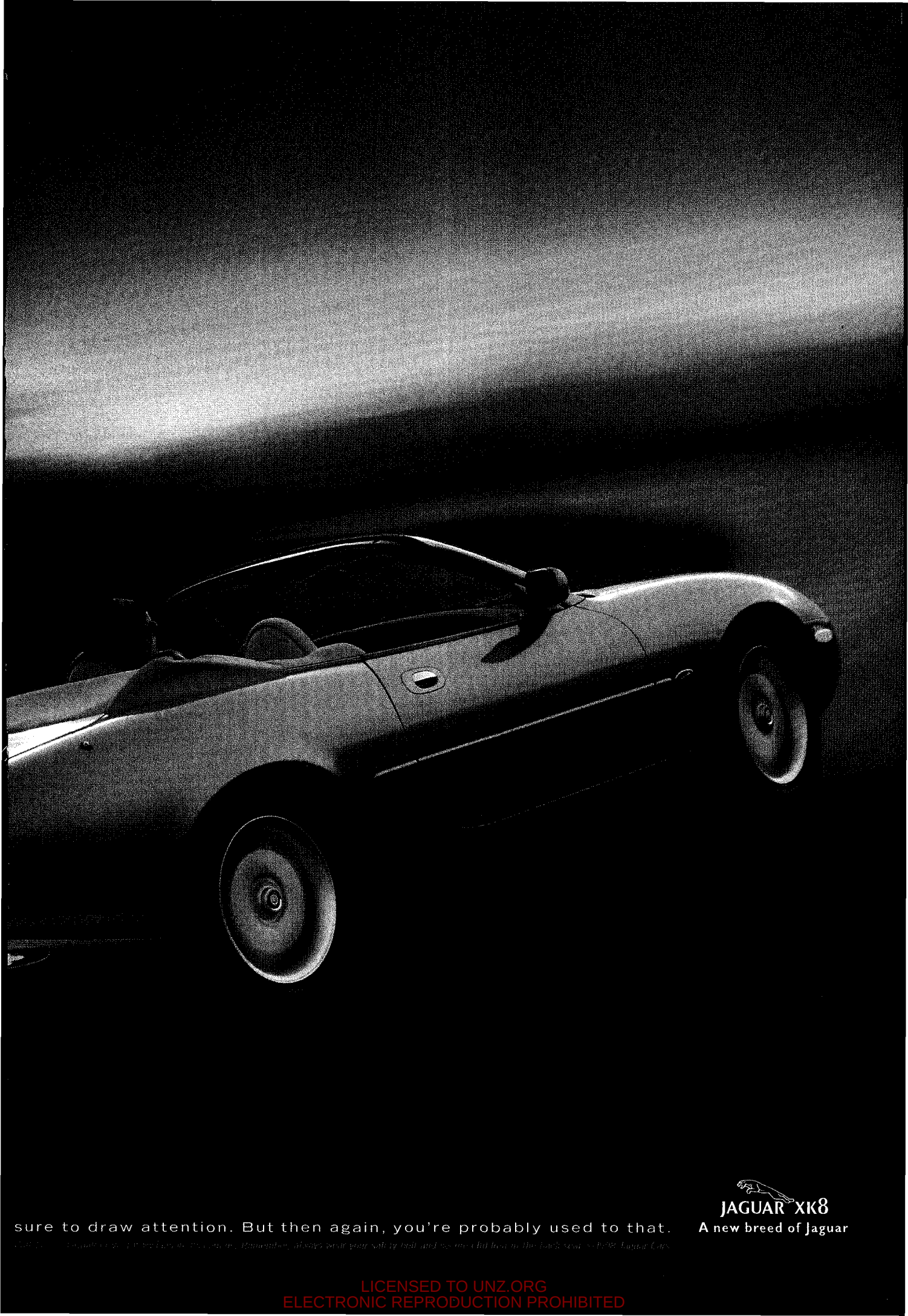
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Holmes said. "They just see. They take it in, they extract the particular fact they need to deal with, and they entirely miss the mechanisms of seeing. It never occurs to them that they have a vast dynamic range in their eyes, and that they can adjust through vast light-level changes, from sunlight on snow at high altitude to starlight at night—an incredible ten-million-to-one range. Photography is this miserable, weak little thing that can show you a print with a hundred-to-one brightness range. Or a two-hundred-to-one brightness range, tops."

Joseph Holmes's quest for the perfect print—a crusade he

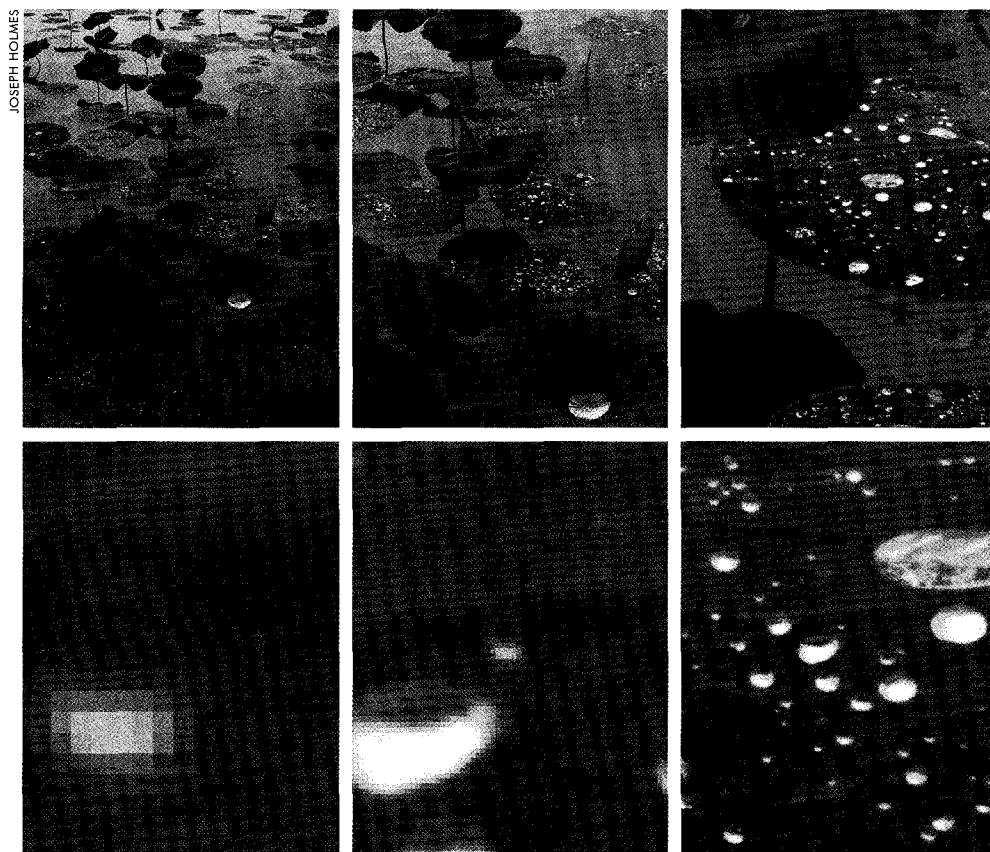
on digital imaging. But it's unavoidable. I have no choice."

The rewards of his latest five-year project—which is now actually in its eighth year—would soon be enormous, he predicted. His average labor time on a Cibachrome print had been four hours. With digital imaging the time is reduced radically. "I could make only a few hundred Cibachrome prints a year, maximum," he said. "Ansel made, what, twenty-five thousand prints in his lifetime, of about eighteen hundred different subjects. So far I've printed a hundred subjects. I need to print several hundred subjects to have what I think is a reasonable life's work."

I could understand the allure of any process that reduced the hours of printmaking and freed the photographer to roam. I remembered Ansel Adams's old lament about the prison of his darkroom. Beside his house in Carmel Highlands, overlooking the Pacific, beneath a hill covered in chaparral and floodlit beautifully at night, was the fireproof bunker in which Adams stored his negatives. He would complain often that several lifetimes' worth of work lay there underground. It really made no sense, he said, to take a single new photograph. He laughed at the irony, but I believe that it truly depressed him. I think it diminished his thrill in spreading the legs of the tripod and disappearing under the black

cloth. The backlog of negatives meant that most of the images he had seen through the viewfinder, and visualized as prints, and captured with his camera, would never grow past the embryonic stage represented by the negative. Much of his lifework would never be seen by others.

Joseph Holmes, after eight years of work with digital imaging, has become an expert in the new science of color management. Much of his income now comes from consulting for fine-art printmaking companies, lithographers, publishers, museums—anyone with imaging problems. "It's sort of like herding an infinite number of sheep over rough terrain," he says. "All the sheep are individual colors, they're all trying to get away, and you're trying to keep them in or-



Clockwise from top left: Joseph Holmes's photograph Lily pads, Reelfoot Lake, Tennessee, 1979, with two hundred and eighty-five megabytes in the image. With each successive frame the magnification increases by a factor of four

does not seem to find at all quixotic—has occupied the past twenty-three years. Ansel Adams, who shared this almost religious dedication to the print, turned to music for his metaphor and mantra. "The negative is the score," Adams would recite. "The print is the performance." Holmes spends most of his time directing the performance. His servitude to the print requires him to spend his life in the studio; his time in the field toting a camera has been reduced to three or four weeks a year. He does not like this imbalance but sees no way around it.

"Every time I try to print by a new method, it's another five-year project to get it going," he said. "It took five years to get going on dye transfer, it took five years to get going on Cibachrome, and it's taken five years again to get going

der. It's the science of device-independent color, where the color characteristics of every device in your system—the scanner and the way the scanner sees film, the monitor, the printer and the way the printer prints on a given substrate—are all described in device-independent terms. Their colors are described in absolute color numbers that become a common language of color. When it all works right, the colors you see on your monitor are the colors in the print, but there are a vast number of ways for it not to turn out right."

Digital-imaging technology is evolving by leaps and bounds, Holmes said. A number of companies are racing to develop the best printers, and each year's ink-jet machines are twice as good as those of the year before. "It's endless," he said. Hearing the weariness in his voice, I asked if he worried that his labors might be Sisyphean, given the way the technology keeps changing. He denied it. He was familiar now with computer systems. Once digital printmaking really started to work, he said, it would only get better and easier.

I hoped he was right. I hoped that the grail would not keep receding—that digital imaging would free him to take his good eye out under the sky more often. It will be terrible if he winds up an old shepherd, hunched at the screen, driving his obstreperous, bleating, multicolored flock through ever more mountainous Himalayas, stretched out range on range through cyberspace.

When I asked Holmes his opinion on the controversy over digital manipulation, he shrugged. The issue did not interest him much. "It's obvious that Art Wolfe should have mentioned in his book that he was adding extra animals," he said. "That's a substantial distortion of reality. One of the things that nature photographs do, inevitably, is to report on nature. But they don't necessarily do it in literal ways. It's not easy to define how much of a given landscape photograph consists of reportage and how much is an artistic interpretation."

"If Wolfe had acknowledged a little more clearly what he had done, it would have been okay?" I asked.

"Well, certainly. Why not? People paint things all the time. We don't think they're criminals for making paintings."

A FLOCK OF GOLDEN RETRIEVERS

AMONG photographers, opinion on digital manipulation seems to fall into either of two schools, the principal spokesmen for which are Galen Rowell and Art Wolfe, who have both been collaborators of mine. These men are energetic in a force-of-nature way, tireless travelers, prodigiously productive. Neither is a photographer so much as a little but prolific photographic industry, producing books, prints, postcards, and advertising images.

Mountain Light Photography, Galen and Barbara Rowell's shop, is a converted warehouse in Emeryville, Califor-

nia, not far from the shore of San Francisco Bay. When I visited recently, I was greeted at the door by Khumbu, the Rowells' fifteen-year-old golden retriever. Khumbu wore a bandanna around his neck—a memento of a recent grooming visit to Dogs by Diane. The hair on his head and face had gone completely gray since I had seen him last. The bandanna and the salon pampering it symbolized seemed an indignity to an old outdoorsman like Khumbu, but he bore it cheerfully enough.

Mountain Light is bright and spacious inside, the white walls of the first-floor lobby museum-lit and hung with an ever changing gallery of Rowell's prints. Waiting for the photographer to appear, I made a circuit of his walls: *Sunset Over Machu Picchu*. *Last Light on Horsetail Falls*. *Polar Bear Resting Against Its Mother*. I lingered before Rowell's most famous photograph, *Rainbow Over the Potala Palace, Lhasa*. The rainbow strikes the palace dead center. This would put the pot of gold in the throne room or the pantry of the palace, formerly owned by Rowell's friend the Dalai Lama. On the evidence of this photo, Tibetan Buddhism is the answer. The rainbow seemed much brighter than in other prints of it I had seen. I gave it a hard look and then the benefit of the doubt. I moved on. At *Cuernos del Paine at Dawn, Lago Pehoe, Patagonia*, I paused again. For years I never quite believed this picture—the febrile radiance of the yellow-flowering shrubs in the foreground, the improbable aquamarine of the glacial lake in the middle distance, the sheer, phantasmagoric granite towers of the "Horns" of Paine in the sky. Then, last February, on an assignment to southern Chile, I found myself at dawn on the shore of this very lake, and I saw that it was all true. I crossed the room to *Alaska Brown Bear, Katmai National Park*. The bear is standing in the white torrent of a cascade, a salmon poised in mid-leap just inches from its open jaws. The shutter had arrested the fish forever in the instant before its demise.

Another brown bear was once on this wall, rearing to its

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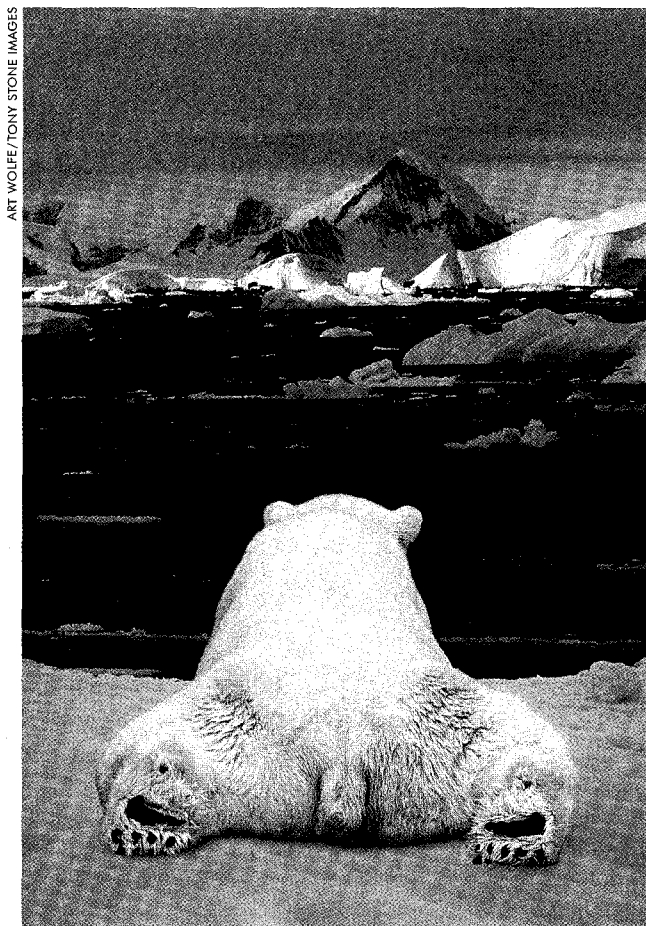
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PHOTOGRAPHY HAS

ENTERED A BRAVE

NEW EPOCH.

full height and roaring directly into the camera. This bear was an actor named Bart, a grizzly everyman, the brown bear you see in all the movies and commercials requiring brown bears. When Bart was mounted here, roaring his signature roar, Mountain Light's visitors all gravitated to him. How in God's name, everyone asked Rowell, had he managed to take this photograph and survive? When Rowell explained that the bear was an acquaintance and a thespian, he saw a little light of admiration die in their eyes. It seemed to him that they now looked differently at all his pictures. He retired Bart from the wall.



ART WOLFE/TONY STONE IMAGES

Ohio polar bear in Antarctica, a land without bears

Rowell, appearing at the head of the stairway, invited me up to his projection room. Khumbu followed at my heels. Khumbu was named for the Everest region of Nepal, one of his master's favorite hangouts. The dog was a climber once, but now his ascent of the stairway was labored and slow.

In the photography workshops Rowell teaches, he must, he believes, do more than impart technique. These days he needs to impart ethics as well. Even as images grow sharper with digital enhancement, the honest path grows murkier, and Rowell feels that students need guidance. Today's class was just Khumbu and me. Rowell loaded the carousel of his ethics lesson on the projector, closed the curtain at the door, and pressed the button. The first slide showed an Eadweard

Muybridge sequence of running horses from 1872. This particular series had settled a \$25,000 bet over whether all four hooves are ever off the ground at the same time. (They are.) The Muybridge was a relic of the day when the photograph was incontrovertible, *prima facie* evidence. The second slide showed a photograph doctored by Senator Joe McCarthy to juxtapose one of his targets with some Communist or fellow traveler. Guilt by association is a dubious proposition to begin with. This was *fake* guilt by association. The McCarthy represented the photograph as hoax. Rowell pressed the button again.

Elephants. A herd on the move, its subgroups tinted in several colors.

"This picture is from Art Wolfe's book *Migrations*," Rowell said. "This is how it appeared in a story on digital manipulation in *The Denver Post*. They've color-coded the animals to show groups that are identical and have been cloned." He walked to the screen and began pointing. "This whole group of seven is this group of seven. Three of *these* seven, up here, are these three down here—which have been cloned yet again, right here. This one is this one is this one is this one. This pair is this pair, and this pair is this pair. Fifty-four elephants in a picture that originally had fifteen."

The Pyramids at Giza in the smoky light of evening. Three camels and their riders in the foreground.

"The famous *National Geographic* cover," Rowell said. "The Pyramids were moved in relation to the camel riders to make room for the logo. Originally the cover was to be a picture of mine of a Tibetan boy. They kicked it off because the Chinese Embassy objected. The Chinese said they wouldn't let *National Geographic* writers and photographers into Tibet again if they ran that picture on the cover. It was already at the printer's. When they decided to yank mine out, they needed an instant replacement. They chose this picture, which was a horizontal. In making it a vertical they reset the riders."

Zebras. A tapestry of stripes, the herd standing so close together that not a speck of ground or wildebeest or anything else non-zebraic shows in the frame.

"This is a close-up of the cover of *Migrations*," Rowell said. He pointed to the face of a zebra just above the *t* in the book's title. Then he pointed to another zebra face just below the *e* in Art Wolfe's name. "Zebras have a 'fingerprint' in their patterns," he said. "These are different frames of the same zebra."

Cleft rock in silhouette against pale evening sky, with pink, ethereal cirrus above.

I recognized this photo as Rowell's own, one I had always admired: blackness versus brightness, earth versus sky, near versus far. Solidity of stone versus ethereality of vapor. "This picture was digitally altered on the cover of my book *Mountain Light*," Rowell said. "In order to make it fit the

"When I was in high school, my physics teacher—whose name was Mr. Bader—called me down one day after physics class and said, 'You look bored; I want to tell you something interesting.' Then he told me something which I found absolutely fascinating, and have, since then, always found fascinating."

Richard Feynman
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cover, they did two things—with my permission. They ‘chopped and channeled’ it, like an old hot-rod. They took a section of sky out, which moved the cloud down so they wouldn’t have to crop it so much. I felt there was a very good rationale for doing it, and that it preserved the original image I had in mind.”

Negative space has positive virtues in art. Whole essays have been written on the dynamic interval—the electric synapse—between God’s outstretched finger and Adam’s on the Sistine Chapel ceiling. I asked Rowell which he preferred of the intervals between the heaven and earth of his own picture. Without hesitation he answered that he liked his original cleft rock and cloud. “That’s why I took it that way. But if I had just stepped back and bent down, I would have gotten a picture with the cloud a little lower. I thought that the alteration was a little bit on the edge, but okay.”

Cheetahs. A mother cat reclining on grass, six cubs piled upon her.

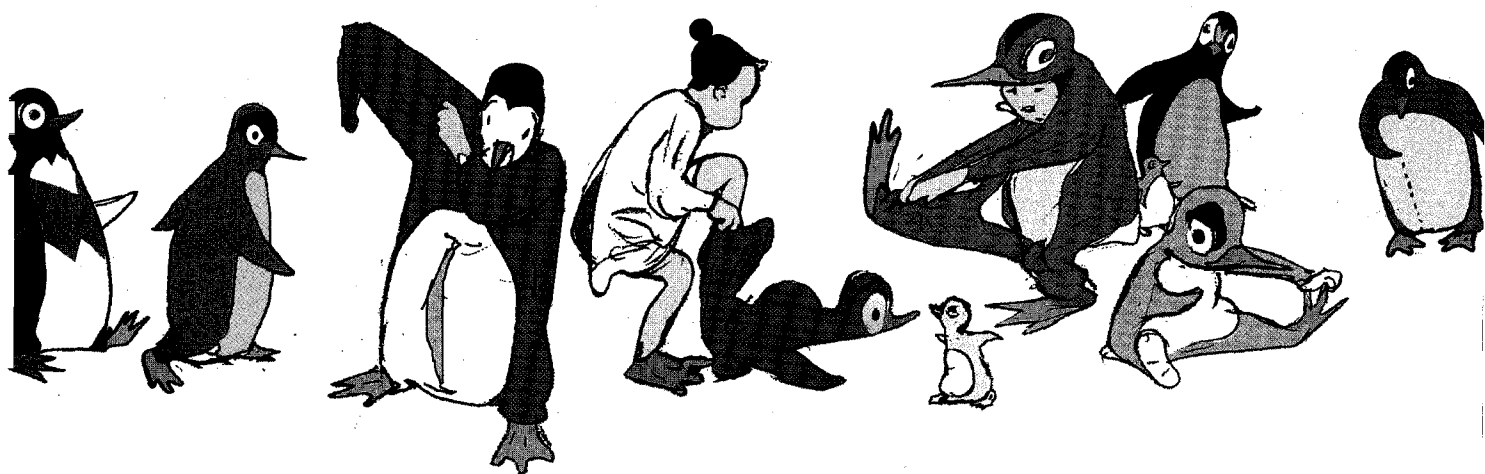
This cheetah family portrait, according to Rowell, was an Art Wolfe composite of two zoo photographs, one of a mother and single cub, the other of five cubs. Wolfe had digitally removed a zoo fence from the background and reseeded the area with virtual grass. The image had drawn fire at a conference of the North American Nature Photography Association, where an editor from the World

like a cheetah inundated by six cubs. She had the relaxed eyes of a mother of one—which was what she was. The more I looked at the picture, the more artificial it appeared.

“In summary,” Rowell said, and he pushed the button to advance the carousel. *Bald eagle*. “Totally wild photo, no problem.” *Bust of bald eagle, filling frame*. “Totally captive photo. No problem for a lot of markets. Federal Express. Post Office. That’s my photo, but it’s a captive eagle, and I wouldn’t sell it for a story on wild eagles without putting ‘captive’ on my slide mount. Some people would.” *Eagle soaring against snowy ridge*. “Here’s a photo that I manipulated years ago. That was an eagle on a gray sky that I superimposed against a ridge of Mount McKinley—a ‘sandwich.’ I did it for a slide show about twenty years ago, set to music. I never put it out for publication. Now I wouldn’t even create it. I feel it would compromise my work.”

Polar bear. A rear view, the bear relaxing on its belly, facing away across a channel of open water and small icebergs.

“This photo, advertised here in an ad for Tony Stone Images, became very controversial. National Geographic Online, representing the Discovery Channel and the Explorer TV series, bought this image from Tony Stone without passing it by the editorial side of the magazine. It appeared in a full-page ad in *National Geographic*. As soon as it was dis-



Wildlife Fund had objected to it. “The complaint,” Rowell said, “was that cheetahs can’t have six cubs. Art’s defense is that the zoologists who declared this were wrong. Apparently the literature says they can have as many as eight. So Art says, ‘Yep, it’s good natural history. They can have up to eight.’”

Whether or not six or eight cubs made sense, something was wrong with the photograph. I could not quite put my finger on it. It might have been in the attention of the cats, which seemed divided in an unnatural way. (Two things of considerable and absolutely equal interest seemed to be approaching the group of felines from different directions.) It might have been in the calm of the mother. She did not look

covered, *National Geographic* pulled the ad. This is a bear in a zoo in Ohio, superimposed digitally against the Lemaire Channel, in Antarctica, where there are no polar bears.”

The Arctic is named for its *arctos*, its bear. Its antipodes have never had one. The photograph had reversed the polarity of the planet. I laughed at the boldness, or perhaps it was the oversight, that allowed the photographer to fill this empty Antarctic niche. The bear was a hoax and an oxymoron, but it was funny. The setting, Lemaire Channel, could have fooled me—its icebergs looked Arctic enough. But again I was nagged by something wrong in the picture. The longer I looked at it, the more it seemed to fall apart.

The bear’s stubby tail and the dark pads of its rear paws

faced the camera. It lay completely oblivious of the cameraman behind. Polar bears are far-ranging predators with wonderful sensory equipment. They inhabit vast solitudes and always know when they have company. In all the photographs of wild polar bears that I have seen (save those taken at Churchill, a town in Manitoba, where the bears are semi-habituated to human beings), the bear's nose is elevated as he tries to get a whiff of the cameraman, or he is moving off uneasily. This supposed Antarctic bear was indifferent to the human being behind it, and that was not natural. The bear's backside and the hams of its legs were matted and stained yellow. The pattern looked peculiar. In sedentary periods wild polar bears are often tinted an attractive old-ivory yellow all over, by their urine, but here the yellow was localized. The bear had dyed itself, I suspected, by sitting for long periods in its urine, before its digital liberation from a concrete slab in Cincinnati and its transport to the wrong pole. Rowell himself had not noticed this pattern. "I think you're

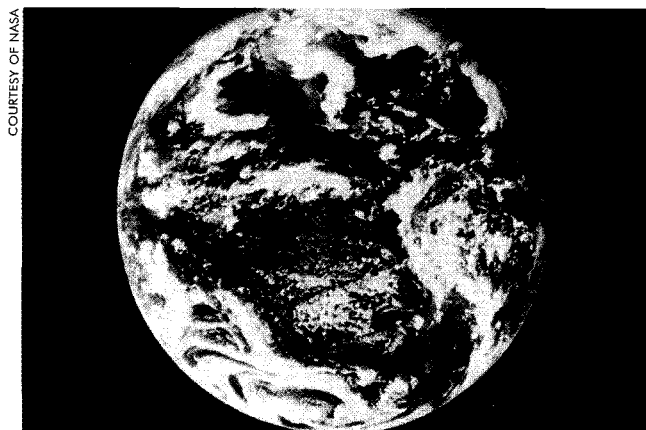
right," he said, staring at his screen. "You wouldn't see it like that by open water."

Earthrise. Whiteness of moon in foreground. Across the barren lunar terrain a message scrawled in longhand: "To Tony, I hope you can see this someday. Bill Anders, Apollo 8."

"This was taken by Colonel William Anders in 1968," Rowell said. "He held his Hasselblad up to the window and fired away." Rowell, an acquaintance of Anders's, had begged a copy for his son Tony, and the print had arrived with its dedication in longhand, along with a cover note: "Here's a picture your dad asked me to send you that I took on my last vacation."



Earth levitated for a while in the darkened room, against the blackness of eternal space. Khumbu, the golden retriever gone gray, had no interest in earthrise. For dogs, compelling terrestrial images are much closer under the nose. Khumbu put his chin on my thigh and looked soulfully into my eyes for attention. He was highly redolent of old dog, not a bad smell, and I scratched him behind the ear. Khumbu's master, for his part, seemed hypnotized by the image. "This is all about lifting the camera and taking a picture of what you see," he said finally. "It's different from a remote picture that you don't quite believe in the same way be-



The earth as snapped by satellite (top) and as photographed by an actual human being

cause there was no human being there behind the camera."

Snapped robotically, NASA photos of earthrise, more detailed and tightly composed, have been published, Rowell said. In his opinion, none has the poetic power or has evoked the sentiment and acclaim that this one has—the shutter tripped by a human finger. Rowell believes, along with many, that Anders's earthrise is epochal, that it is the most important photograph in the history of environmental awareness.

The colonel's earthrise reminded Rowell of the words of another colleague, the Dalai Lama. The two collaborated on the book *My Tibet*—photos by Rowell, text by His Holiness. In 1987, at a symposium of neuroscientists, psychologists, and artificial-intelligence experts, Rowell said, the Dalai

Lama was asked how Buddhists validate their perceptions. The scientists wondered, among other things, whether Buddhists accept the existence of external phenomena apart from concepts already in place in their minds. The answer, the Dalai Lama said, was in the Buddhist concept called Extremely Hidden Phenomena. "I know the earth to be a round bluish globe," he explained, "although I have never seen it and have not done any conclusive reasoning about it. I know the earth is round by relying on the words of someone who has seen it and proved it with photographs. First you must prove that the person is reliable by various reasonings—that there is no reason he should tell lies with false photos. After this you understand that the earth is round, although you haven't seen it. This is called inference based upon belief. You have to rely on a person who has already had this kind of experience and has no reason to tell lies."

Rowell glanced at me to see if the aptness of this had sunk in. Then he quoted another astronaut, Rusty Schweickart, who had followed Colonel Anders into space. "You are the sensing element for humanity," Schweickart reported on returning. "And that becomes a rather special responsibility." That special responsibility, in Rowell's opinion, is shared by photographers, too.

Cranes taking wing in Africa. Above them an impala leaping.

"Final picture," Rowell said. "This is from Ernst Haas's *The Creation*. The impala was in the middle of one of those high bounds. Back then, when *The Creation* was published, this was just a wonderful serendipity. Now the first thing somebody would think is 'Ah, how did he fake it?' And that's what we've lost."

Downstairs, as Rowell and Khumbu herded me toward the door, we paused at a computer monitor in the stockroom. Rowell asked an assistant to call up a particular image for me. The assistant searched rank upon rank of icons. Each icon marked the file of a photograph. The assistant double-clicked on one, and the computer chattered faintly to itself, making its thousands of binary decisions. Then the image formed and clarified. It was a photograph of Khumbu cloned many times, in the manner of Art Wolfe's elephants. A formation of dozens of identical leaping Khumbus filled the sky, and a few Khumbus in the lead were alighting with a splash in a marsh. "This is called *Golden Retrievers Migrating South*," Rowell said, grinning.

"He was more athletic then, wasn't he?" I said, laughing. "And he was more numerous."

This fabrication was a riposte to Wolfe, I understood, and yet, as a friend of Khumbu's, and as someone who had just lost his own sixteen-year-old dog to the indignities of age, I found I liked the picture. It was winningly surrealistic, like something by Magritte or Escher. The apotheosis and replication of Khumbu made Rowell's point nicely, and yet it was somehow stirring.

PACK OF WOLFES

IN an average year, according to the jacket copy for *Migrations*, Art Wolfe visits all seven continents and shoots more than 2,000 rolls of film. Indeed, *Migrations* might have served as a fine title for Wolfe's autobiography, had he not used it already for his work on the movements of animals. Like Galen Rowell, Wolfe is at home anywhere on earth—in the cold of either pole or in African heat, in jungle or desert, taiga or tundra, under water or above. Whereas Rowell works in higher regions (he began as a climber, and mountain light still illuminates the core of his work), Wolfe has more experience down on the savannas and steppes. Like his predator namesake, Wolfe derives his bread and butter from following the herds. In his ubiquity with a camera, he seems almost to have cloned himself. He has become a whole pack of Wolfes. By his reckoning, he has taken a million photographs, and his files now amount to a Noah's ark of images. It is odd—or perhaps not odd at all—that Rowell and Wolfe, in many ways so similar, should find themselves champions of opposing views. When I caught up with Wolfe recently, between expeditions, we had not spoken for a couple of years, since comparing notes on a magazine story we did together on the island of Mauritius. I asked him about the digital imbroglio.

"Certainly I've been in the heart of the controversy," he told me. "But I can't really, honestly think it's been bad for my career. It certainly brought a lot of attention to the work I was doing. I think any artist or photographer—or writer, for that matter—would want that. A lot of people have noticed *Migrations*. A lot of people gave it a lot of praise. It also, as you know, got up the ire of some of my colleagues. But not most of them. I think a lot of people understood what I was trying to do with that book.

"*Migrations* is historically an old book now. It was published four years ago, and that's ancient history in the world of photography. We formulated a very clear policy as a result of that book. Since then we've published another book, *In the Presence of Wolves*, with five digital illustrations that were labeled as such, and no one objected. So we figured out that people were upset less because we used the technology than because we did not always say we had. We are using the technology now in developing stock photography—photos or illustrations fed directly into the advertising market. We've completely backed away from doing digital illustrations that can look real, simply because once it's out of our hands, we lose our control of where it's used."

Last September, Wolfe attended an ethics conference hosted by the National Museum of Wildlife Art, in Jackson Hole, Wyoming. He and a number of other nature photographers—including Frans Lanting, Jim Blaylock, Nick Nichols, Chris Johns, and Tom Mangelsen—discussed the problems of digital manipulation and photography of cap-

tive animals. "We talked about where we thought photography was going," Wolfe said. "We came to a pretty clear understanding of where we felt it should go, and how it should go. We felt that whatever we agreed upon would probably become the standard in the industry in the years to come.

"About three years ago I led the industry in demanding from my agencies that they start labeling digital illustrations as such. They concurred and started labeling. Now most stock agencies around the world are following suit. I think the rest of the photographers at Jackson Hole thought that that was the most appropriate way of presenting the work. They also felt that digital enhancement—darkening of sky, say, and other things that had been done in the past by printing techniques in the darkroom—need not be labeled."

Wolfe laughed. "Out of the million photos I've done, less than two hundred have digital components. I'm still not using the technology all that often."

"Has the controversy spoiled your fun in using digital?" I asked.

"No, not at all. I remain unbowed. I was clear on where I was going to use it from the very, very beginning. I knew it was going to be controversial before we even had the book printed. But also, to this day I would be in a quandary as to how to identify the digital work in *Migrations*. It really ran the spectrum from very radical combinations of photos to very minuscule fixes, where maybe a single head in a flock of two hundred birds would be changed just to complete a pattern. I know of no symbols that show that great a range."

"WHENEVER

I HEAR THE WORD

'ETHICS,' IT RAISES

THE HAIR ON THE

BACK OF MY

NECK," SAYS THE

NATURE PHOTOGRA-

PHER ART WOLFE.

"THE POINT HERE

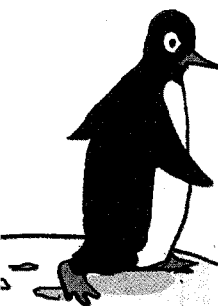
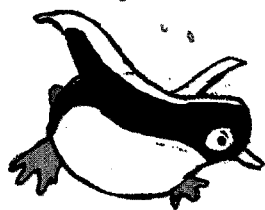
IS THAT WE ALL

HAVE DIFFERENT

STANDARDS."

AGE OF MENDACITY

MANKIND has lived through ages of stone, iron, bronze, exploration, enlightenment, the atom, space. Our own time is, as much as anything else, the Age of Falsification. The nip, the tuck, the face-lift, the silicone implant. The fascination with virtual reality in a world teeming with real realities. The vogue of the magical realists and their pale, nervous whimsy in a world absolute-



ly ashimmer with real magic. The Michael Jordan shoe. The sound bite and the injury it can do not only to content but also to honesty in our political discourse. (Lincoln required three hours of oration just to warm up.) The blockbuster movie in which story line and plausibility are sacrificed to digital effects and Dolby Sound. (At the present rate of entropy, all

cinema will soon be one continuous explosion.) Those “Do people care?” Chevron ads, which have now suckled a whole generation. White female blues singers singing on National Public Radio in exactly the style of old black men from the Mississippi Delta.

Nature, in contrast, is always true. Throughout most of its history photography has been a chronicle of real moments. That is what is so disheartening about Art Wolfe’s computer-generated flocks and herds. Nature photography is one part of our culture where authenticity might make a stand. It is dispiriting to see its practitioners turn and go with the flow.

Photofakery is pernicious to natural history. Lemmings do not commit suicide, either individually or en masse from cliffs—Darwin and common sense forbid it. Yet thanks to Disney, several generations of Americans believe that lemmings do. Only elephants can pull off an authentic migration of elephants. A photographer may have spent his life observing elephants, and may believe that he knows their habits well, but when he begins cloning his own herds, error and falseness will inevitably creep in.

“Over the years, as I reviewed the material,” Art Wolfe writes in the introduction to *Migrations*, “I often had to pass over photographs because in a picture of masses of animals

invariably one would be wandering in the wrong direction, thereby disrupting the pattern I was trying to achieve. Today the ability to digitally alter this disruption is at hand."

Wandering in the wrong direction according to whom? Whose patterns is the nature photographer supposed to celebrate—nature's or his own? In the human herd that animal wandering in the wrong direction would be the Buddha, or Luther, or Einstein. We generally regard these rogues and erratics as among the more interesting features of the big picture, and human history cannot be related without reference to them. Animals turned in the wrong direction are a truth of nature. If anything, they *validate* the pattern, as exceptions that prove the rule. The accidental and the unpredictable are vital to art. Without those elements art becomes boring. Reversing the contrary animal is wrongheaded, not only journalistically but also artistically.

Photofakery is pernicious to conservation. Photographers—along with poets, painters, astronauts, reporters—are a sensing element for humanity. The public increasingly depends for much of its environmental awareness on photographic images from around the world. These images need to be true. Zoo cheetahs, when subjected to digital fertility treatments and freed on a virtual savanna, can spawn huge litters, but real African cheetahs are in desperate reproductive trouble, their populations reduced to the point that inbreeding and its genetic consequences threaten their survival.

Digital photofakery creates problems for photographers who choose to shoot straight. Manufactured serendipity is so much quicker and easier than the genuine kind.

Digital photofakery is likely to be pernicious also, in the long run, to the continued good will of photography's audience. Photography and the public have an unusual compact. "The camera does not lie" is a proposition that most of us know to be false yet we half believe anyway. This is a dynamic unique in the arts. The "willing suspension of disbelief" that Coleridge detected at the heart of poetic faith becomes in photographic faith a nearly automatic suspension. Once betrayed, this sort of uncomplicated belief goes quickly past willing to unwilling. Art Wolfe's *Migrations* is the perfect example. The book is briefly entertaining as a "Where's Waldo?" exercise. Finding the reduplicated zebras on the book's cover requires a close attention to stripes, forcing one to appreciate as never before the wonderful painting on zebras. But soon one is just searching for Waldo and ceases to see wildlife. Interest evaporates as the pages are turned. Halfway through I found I did

not want to look at the pictures anymore. Wolfe's defense—that the book is not natural history but art—does not wash. The title is *Migrations*, the subject is wild animals on the march, the text is natural history. The point of the book is not the artful composition of the images but the multitudes in them. Those multitudes are inflated and fake.

In *Biographia Literaria*, along with his famous observation on the willing suspension of disbelief, Coleridge listed "the two cardinal points of poetry, the power of exciting the sympathy of the reader by a faithful adherence to the truth of nature, and the power of giving the interest of novelty by modifying colors of imagination." In the digital doctoring of photographs these two cardinal points have come into conflict.

THE SNOWS OF CHO OYU

ON my living-room wall is a Galen Rowell print, *Evening on the Tingri Plain Below Cho Oyu* (26,750 feet), 1988. A Tibetan woman leads a gray horse across a vast gravel plain, under icy peaks at the roof of the world. Bringing up the rear, in the long evening shadow cast by woman and horse, walks a small Tibetan boy. I know that this is a reduplicated moment, because years ago I asked Rowell about it. Rowell saw the woman lead her horse under Cho Oyu, but his camera was not ready. His local companion casually suggested that he could ask the woman to pass under Cho Oyu again—it was the companion's wife on her way home. This minimal degree of setup hardly amounts to deception, and I still love the photograph, but for me a few lumens of brightness have faded from the picture. Rowell does not notice any such dimming. He sees only the triumph of one of his more wonderful pictures. The hard work of making a photograph is not like the easy work of looking at one, and a little crevasse will probably always lie between maker and viewer. Photography's task in the digital age will be to ensure that the crevasse does not erode into a chasm.

When one is not obliged to make photographs, one can easily take a position purer than the snows of Cho Oyu. On the matter of digital manipulation I have arrived at a view more pristine than that held by any of the photographers I have interviewed.

Galen Rowell, champion of the anti-digitalists, showed me a photo book called *Brother Wolf*, on the cover of which the titular wolf peeks out from behind a tree trunk. This wolf art was not by Art Wolfe but by the wildlife photographer Jim Brandenburg. "Brandenburg freely admits that this image has been altered," Rowell said. "He softened out the left side of the picture, where the title would go, and he intensified the eye. He brought out the color and whiteness to make that eye stand out more. I think that's okay."

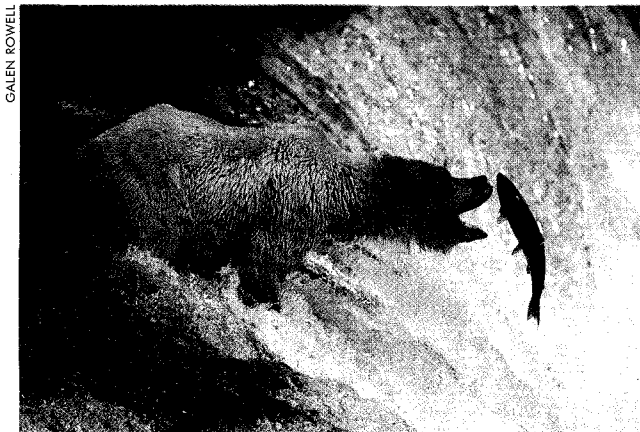
But is it okay? Is it honest photography? How is it different from airbrushing?

Rowell opened the book to a photo of a running wolf. "In

an image like this he edge-sharpened the nose. And I don't have a problem with that. I think that if you're tuning in an image with digital technique to look more like what you saw, to do what the camera couldn't quite do, to make something sharper so you could see it better, something that was really there in front of the camera, then all that's fine."

I suggested to Rowell that "tuning in an image to look more like what you saw" allowed abundant room for the photographer to fool himself, and us, about what he had really seen. Rowell agreed.

"But these are things you technically could have gotten,"



Top, Galen Rowell's unaltered Alaska Brown Bear; bottom, his digitally cloned dog

he said, "if you used faster film or owned a faster lens, and your technique was better."

I can sympathize. But shouldn't the photographer's solution be to select that faster film, buy that faster lens, improve that technique?

"It was something that was in front of the camera," Rowell went on, "rather than something that was added. That's a big difference. As a general rule, but not absolute, things that are added are a red flag, where things that are subtracted may not be."

This, too, seems a suspect principle. The reasoning strikes me as flawed in an almost mathematical way. If addition should be forbidden, why not subtraction? In their

aesthetic tastes Rowell may be a reductionist and Art Wolfe a productionist, but no general rule of ethics can be abstracted from this.

In my talk with the printmaker Joseph Holmes I mentioned Ansel Adams's *Winter Sunrise, The Sierra Nevada From Lone Pine, California*, and Adams's excision of the "LP" from the picture. Holmes laughed. "He usually wasn't able to delete it all that effectively," he said. "You can still see it in the image. But he was right. It was a gross scar on the scene. It's like you can have the scene back in at least one reality. There was no point in spoiling it twice—first by spoiling this great landscape, and then spoiling the great picture of it, too."

When I asked Holmes if he had ever done digital manipulation that left him uncomfortable, he considered for a moment.

"The hardest decision I've had on a retouching job was whether to remove a really obvious road from a picture—a road that I always thought spoiled the way the scene looked. Taking out a less obvious road I don't have the slightest qualms about, but in the case of something really obvious, something recognizable—that's a problem. It's obvious to me, for example, that no recognizable landscape should be 'flopped.' Yosemite Valley you shouldn't flop. But if you have a picture of detailed vegetation, and it looks better backwards, you should reverse it. Because it doesn't make any difference to the natural history of the place. There's no left-rightness about the way the plants grow that would be misleading to a botanist. There's absolutely no reportage element in there of any value."

A one-lane road may be ripe for digital erasure, but a two-lane road is not? Logging road yes, interstate no? The rationale for the prohibition against flopping a famous landscape, I gather, is that if you flop it, the viewer might catch on. Is this the kind of relationship we want between photographer and audience? And who says that "left-rightness" has nothing to do with the way plants grow? Handedness is one of the enduring mysteries of life. If it manifests itself in molecules, perhaps it also manifests itself in trees.

"If I should pick up litter in a national park and thereby alter the landscape," Holmes said, "I would be just as happy to pick up litter in the virtual national park for the same reason exactly. If I don't want the national park to have litter in it, I'll pick it up."

He can pick it up if he wants, of course, but then what of the Buddhist doctrine of Extremely Hidden Phenomena? What of the photographer as sensing element for humanity?

A labeling system like the one settled on by the photographers and editors who convened at Jackson Hole last summer will help, but only marginally, I think. The labels will catch the attention of other photographers and editors, but will go largely unnoticed by the rest of us. I wish that the Jackson Hole gathering had included a *consumer* of photographs, not just producers. I find it odd that I, a word man, should be the one to

point this out, but in photography the image is the thing—a photograph's essential existence is entirely separate from words and explanations. Art Wolfe published a disclaimer in *Migrations*, but nobody reads the text of photo books, particularly the introductions—as the author of many of them, I can testify to this. Bart, the brown bear who once roared on Galen Rowell's gallery wall, was identified in the caption as a trained bear, but few of the gallery visitors read the caption.

The photographer can insist till he's blue in the face that a given image is art, but the rest of us expect at least a measure of reportage there—and we are half the equation.

GROUP *f* / 64

EARLY in its history photography was dismissed as a lesser art, or as no art at all. A photograph, critics said, was just a record of the external moment—a critique that the medium has never entirely escaped. Well into this century photographers found themselves apologetic about their work, and many were drawn to the abnegation of pictorialism. The Pictorialists produced blurred, symbolic, “poetic” prints in an effort to be painterly. The style was in vogue until the 1930s, with intermittent reinventions afterward. In 1932 a group of seven West Coast photographers, among them Ansel Adams, Imogen Cunningham, and Edward Weston, found themselves united in their distaste for the vapid ethic and misty look of pictorialism. One evening in Berkeley, at the house of a member of the group, Willard Van Dyke, the seven debated what they should call themselves. An eighth photographer, a visiting neophyte named Preston Holder, suggested “US 256,” which was then a designation for one of the smaller lens stops—a constricted aperture allowing for the clarity and depth of field favored by the group. Adams worried that as US 256 they might be mistaken for a federal highway, but he liked Holder's drift; he picked up a pencil and sketched out “*f*/64.” The aperture *f*/64 corresponded to US 256 in a new marking system just introduced. The seven photographers liked the graphic elegance of the name—the flourish of the long descender on the *f* Adams drew. They became Group *f*/64. The members believed in straight photography, in “pure” photography—in what Adams called “clear images, smooth honest papers, and . . . the complete absence of affected imitation of other art forms.” They held their first shows, and the public quickly saw, with *f*/64 clarity, that the group of seven had found a better path. Pictorialism withered, and straight photography flourished.

History is circular, and we have come, it seems, to a similar crossroads. Digital technology now allows photographers complete freedom to rearrange reality according to their whims. This is what painters do. The computer has provided the new Pictorialists with capabilities the old Pictorialists never dreamed of, and in so doing has presented all photography, nature photography in particular, with both a

wonderful new toy and a crisis. I believe we need a new Group *f*/64. It could start small, as before—just a cell of believers committed to clarity and depth of field in images and ethics. The original Group *f*/64 believed that photography should encourage and celebrate its differences from painting, and so would the new. The members would just say no to prestidigitation. The Group *f*/64 of the 1930s was burdened, in Ansel Adams's words, with none of “the formal rituals of procedure, incorporations, or any of the limiting restrictions of artistic secret societies.” He wrote, “We have issued no stony manifesto (such as the Surrealists did some years ago); we have stated in works and words what we consider straight photography to be, and we expect and welcome any fresh point of view.” The new group would be similarly flexible. If I were a photographer, that is the bunch I would join.

One of the seven founders of Group *f*/64, John Paul Edwards, had been a prominent Pictorialist before going over to the other side. “The greatest aesthetic beauty, the fullest power of expression, the real worth of the medium, lies in its pure form,” he wrote in *Camera Craft*, a magazine of the time, explaining his defection. “Witness the vogues which have in turn intrigued the worker: the soft-focus lens, carbon, carbro, gum, bromoil transfer, faint gray monotone printing, or its counterpoint, stygian blackness . . . they seemed so important at the time, and are now almost forgotten.”

If the revolution goes as I've imagined it, to this list of forgotten vogues we will soon add digital duplicity. The decisive moment celebrated in Henri Cartier-Bresson's epochal photo book *The Decisive Moment* will compress again to a very brief period of time, not the decisive hours and days spent at the computer screen by the prestidigitators. The eye, and not artifice, will have to solve the intimidating problem at the core of photographic art—the creation of an image that no one has seen before. Photographers will wander the world more like the Zen archers we imagine them to be, with just thirty-six chances per roll. ☘

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Saint Ursula

The personal and professional attention she pays makes Ursula Oppens a composer's pianist

THE pianist Ursula Oppens lives in an elegant building within sight of the stone gates of Columbia University. Although she is not affiliated with the university, it seems a good place for her: the daughter of a classical-pianist mother and a writer father, she spent her childhood summers in Aspen, at the music school where her parents worked; she attended Radcliffe

by Michael Ullman

as an undergraduate and now commutes to Chicago, where she teaches a course in twentieth-century piano music at Northwestern. Oppens seems comfortable around academics, especially the academic composers whose works she has championed—to such an extent that they have dubbed her Saint Ursula.

Oppens is not only the foremost in-

terpreter of contemporary piano music. She has also initiated much of it, having commissioned or given premieres to works by Frederic Rzewski, Anthony Davis, Tobias Picker, and Elliott Carter, whose masterpiece *Night Fantasies* was funded by Oppens in partnership with three other pianists—Paul Jacobs, Gilbert Kalish, and Charles Rosen. It's easy to see why composers enjoy collaborating with her: Oppens has a formidable technique and a formidable intellect to go with it. She sees the connections among things. If Beethoven's *Hammerklavier* is her "favorite work of art," as she says, she finds a comparably vast romanticism in Pierre Boulez's Second Piano Sonata, and a similarity between Beethoven's and Boulez's scherzos. Her performances are informed by her grasp of structure, her rhythmic power, and her respect for a composer's wishes.

There is also her sheer daring. When

she plays the *Hammerklavier*, she follows Beethoven's metronome markings, which some pianists (and scholars) find absurdly fast. She has recorded the *Hammerklavier* (Music & Arts CD-734), and she played it at Carnegie Hall last year. In both cases the results were thrilling. She brought out the elaborate eccentricity of the work, with its clangorous opening and dramatic juxtapositions, its grand tremolos and severe yet celebratory fugue, and she simultaneously illuminated its structure with finely detailed left-hand figures. This marked the beginning of a Beethoven cycle; Oppens hopes that when it ends she will have recorded and played in public all of Beethoven's sonatas. At the same concert, she played for their first performance four études she and Northwestern had commissioned from Tobias Picker. As is typical of Oppens, she made clear from the outset what she hoped for from the composer.

We talked the day after her Carnegie Hall recital. A sandy-haired, slim, bouncy woman in her fifties, Oppens is both informal and gracious. There's nothing of the diva about her. The most interesting feature of her small apartment is a former bedroom refurbished to house her baby grand piano. The room has been carefully soundproofed, with a raised floor and a dropped ceiling. In one corner hang a few medals celebrating what she calls her slow-motion running: she keeps fit by jogging in Central Park. When she was building her music room, Oppens had a sound technician take measurements while Julius Hemphill, the avant-garde jazz player who for many years was a member of the World Saxophone Quartet, played his alto saxophone. The two lived together until Hemphill's death, of complications from diabetes, in 1995; the apartment's walls are covered with posters announcing Hemphill's concerts and tours, including performances of *Long Tongues*, the "saxophone opera" he wrote, for which Oppens played the piano. Oppens said over tea that she was feeling scattered, because of the effort of the previous night's concert, at which she also played a second Beethoven sonata and Rachmaninoff's *Etudes Tableaux*, Op. 33.

Oppens's mother, Edith, studied in Europe with the composer Anton Webern, a fact her daughter didn't know

until she was in her late teens. "My parents didn't talk much about Europe. There was so much pain associated with it." (Jews, they fled Prague in 1938.) "On the other hand, my mother had an attitude that Schoenberg and Bartók and Webern were gods and heroes." Her parents created an atmosphere in which the investigation of contemporary music was encouraged: Oppens remembers going as a child to hear the Juilliard String Quartet give a lecture-demonstration of an Elliott Carter quartet. Though hostile to jazz, her mother had improvised in Webern's class. Ursula, before she was out of high school, went with friends to hear jazz pianists such as Cecil Taylor and Bill Evans.

During Oppens's summers at Aspen she studied piano and, with the other faculty brats, made a pest of herself: at concerts she and Lynn Harrell (the now renowned cellist) and Nina Totenberg (the journalist) and other kids were made to sit in the back of the hall, where their fidgeting attracted less attention. Oppens seems to glow when talking about these summers. In one picture she showed me—she looks about seven—she is playing the cello ("terribly," she says), accompanied on piano by her father, Kurt, who wrote essays and books on music. Music was play, but it was also serious. Before she was in her teens, Oppens was studying with famous teachers, including Victor Babin, who "changed my life." She was the youngest student Babin had ever taught, and he approached her like an adult, asking her to memorize whole movements of music between lessons. She also studied with Leonard Shure, a Brahmsian whose phrasing she had to learn to evade when she started playing Elliott Carter.

Still, Oppens had not decided on a musical career. She studied literature and economics at Radcliffe—literature, she says, because she read incessantly but forgot who wrote what. As a freshman, she heard Pierre Boulez lecture and Leon Kirchner conduct Stravinsky's *Les Noces* and Boulez's *Le Marteau sans maître*. Only after she enrolled at the Juilliard School did she decide to become a musician, although even then she wasn't sure what kind. In her first years there, she studied with one of the most famous piano teachers in the world, Rosina Lhévinne, but still she was "confused



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about what I was doing and whether I wanted to be a pianist or not."

At concerts of the Group for Contemporary Music, Oppens would hear pieces for the first, and in many cases the last, time, and she couldn't tell "whether they were good or bad or beautiful." It didn't matter. It was the way she was hearing, listening for the structure and meaning of new pieces, that seemed crucial—not the criticisms of performances that she and her student friends habitually exchanged. The music, by Milton Babbitt, Charles Wuorinen, Edgard Varèse, Boulez, and others, was challenging. These concerts changed the way Oppens listened to all music. Today she programs Beethoven with Picker, or Brahms with Elliott Carter, because she believes that an audience that has heard new music will hear the familiar more alertly.

Rosina Lhévinne encouraged Oppens to enter competitions, and when she won the Busoni competition, in Bolzano, Italy, in 1969, Oppens was in a quandary. She says now that she should have gone straight to Milan and "gotten management." Instead she came home to play a concert in Connecticut with the cellist Fred Sherry. After a few unhappy years as a traveling pianist who was unprepared to be on the road alone (it was especially lonely for a young woman, she says), she founded the new-music group Speculum Musicae with Sherry and the percussionist Richard Fitz. The "crazy but exciting" band, numbering from seven to ten members, recorded pieces by John Harbison, Rzewski, and Wuorinen, and was given, she says, to a highly impractical version of participatory democracy. Oppens played piano with the New York Philharmonic when Paul Jacobs, the orchestra's pianist, was unavailable; her solo career got a boost—she thinks of it as an unexpected second chance—when she received the Avery Fisher Career Grant, in 1976.

THE honors did not make Oppens complacent—if anything, she challenged herself further. Interested in improvisation, she went in 1978 to the Creative Music Studio, in Woodstock, New

York, where the avant-garde vibraphonist and pedagogue Karl Berger taught improvisation. She was terrified, she remembers—too scared to play a note. Yet "he got to me." Five years later she commissioned *Middle Passage* from Anthony Davis, a composer-pianist who has recorded often as a jazz pianist and also wrote the opera *X. Middle Passage* is dedicated to the poet Robert Hayden,

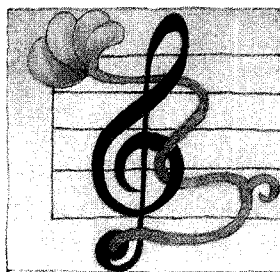
whose poem by the same name describes a voyage of slaves to this country. The piece was a breakthrough for Oppens, because its middle section demanded improvisation. Davis helped: "He said, 'Look at this material that's in the first part of the

piece. Here's a theme: you can play it slower, you can play it faster, you can do it backwards or upside down, you can stretch it out.' I thought to myself, 'Oh! That's like the development section of Mozart.' I got it."

Oppens has worked closely with other composers as well. She is naturally an alert pianist, alert to structure as well as to line. But she is not, perhaps, so naturally a romantic. Tobias Picker is. When Picker was working with her on the Third Etude, he "tried to get me to play slower and more romantically . . . to find that part of me," she says. "That's the harder thing for me, yes."

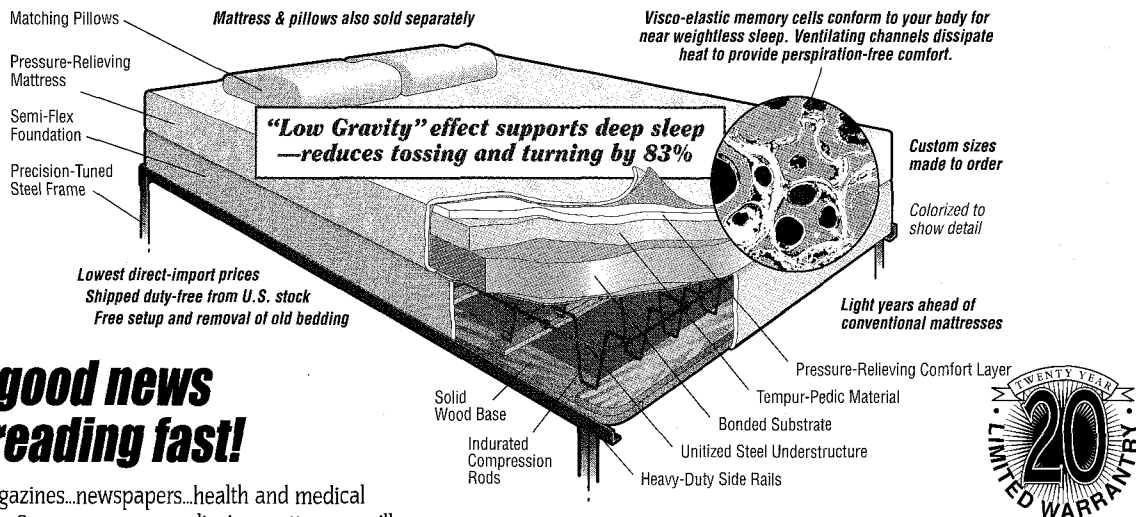
Hemphill and Oppens met in 1983 on a tour organized by the New York State Council on the Arts. A composer and a great blues player, Hemphill was fascinated by Carter's *Night Fantasies*, one of the works being played on the tour. "He was very interested in how far out you could take certain ideas," Oppens says. "I could not call it abstraction but how abstract-seeming the human voice can be." Although in their years together Hemphill and Oppens didn't talk about music very much, they listened to each other play and occasionally offered suggestions. Hemphill heard her play Conlon Nancarrow's *Tango?* and "got me to get it a little livelier," she says, "less stiff."

When Oppens looks at the pieces that have been written for her, she sees something of her own personality in the writing. That personality can be, she says, a bit "nutty," and also genially humorous.



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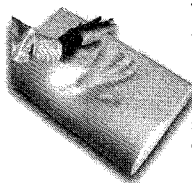
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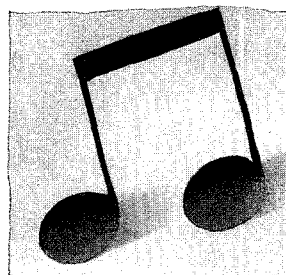
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Many of the pieces, including *Night Fantasies*, Harbison's Piano Sonata No. 1, and Nancarrow's *Two Canons for Ursula*, have been issued on *American Piano Music of Our Time* (Music & Arts CD-862), which was recorded in two volumes in 1989 and 1991 and has since been reissued in a single package. Most of the many tangos in the set were written for the International Tango Collection, which was the idea of the pianist Yvar Mikhashoff. The various composers' doubts about the project are embedded in their works: Nancarrow's *Tango?*, for example, complicates and evades the tango rhythm from the start. William Bolcom's *Dead Moth Tango* begins with a downward run deep into the bass: evidently it is named after a moth that collapsed on the manuscript. Lukas Foss's *The Curriculum Vitae Tango* is more gently playful, but all the composers seem to have had fun—even Hemphill, who apparently started writing his *Parchment* as a tango, although it turned into something of a blues. The rest of the music on the discs demonstrates the range of contemporary piano literature, as Oppens moves with aplomb from the tense colorfulness of Carter to the placid monochromaticism of John Adams, and from Rzewski's variations on the folk song "Mayn Yingele" to Picker's moody *Old and Lost Rivers* and Harbison's rigorous sonata.

Oppens has of course played these pieces for the composers; it has been helpful, she says, but the experience has not made her interpretations definitive. There is no point, she says, in slavishly trying for authenticity. She describes her experience with Carter's *Night Fantasies* as a revelation; like the other three pianists who commissioned the twenty-minute work (she was the first to perform it, in 1980), Oppens was coached by Carter himself. Carter is known for the precision of his markings: he told her that what he calls in his preface to the score "a loud, obsessive, periodic repetition of an emphatic chord" must create the loudest moments in the piece; he "demanded that I have a greater variety of touches than I would have had."

Carter, she learned, has "many articulations . . . so that the piano becomes as colorful as possible." The four pianists produced very different performances.

One of Oppens's most recent recordings is of the Joan Tower Piano Concerto (d'Note Classics DND 1016), a piece whose sometimes shimmering textures bring out her lyrical side. The recording reaffirms what an excellent ensemble player Oppens is: evidently a delight to work with. Years ago she suggested to Carter that he write her a piano quintet, because, she explains, "Every pianist just adores playing with string quartets." Carter declined: he felt that Brahms and Schumann had had the last say on the piano quintet. Then Carter and Oppens worked together in England during the recording by the Arditti Quartet of several pieces by Carter, including his fifth string quintet. Oppens played 90+, a sonata that Carter wrote as a birthday tribute to the Italian composer Goffredo Petrassi, who was born in 1904. Earlier Carter had called Oppens and asked her gleefully whether she had found the ninety notes that stick out of the texture, which he had impishly placed throughout the piece. Carter, Oppens, and the Ardittis had such a good time at the rehearsals and recording sessions that the composer revived the idea of the piano quintet. According to Oppens, Carter has been listening to Brahms's chamber music, and the premiere should take place at the Library of Congress this fall—roughly at the time of Carter's ninetieth birthday. By then Oppens will be well into



her Beethoven cycle, concerts at which she will pair the *Hammerklavier* with Carter's Piano Sonata and Beethoven's *Waldstein* with John Adams's *Phrygian Gates*. She doesn't know what the Carter quintet will be like. "You can't predict

it. You can never predict how a piece will turn out. I can only imagine the last piece." She knows that it will be a major work, and that she will have had something to do with its composition. Mostly Oppens just wants to hear new music. "That," she says with typically wide-eyed enthusiasm, "is very exciting." ☼

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Insidious Weakness

Named for Eugene Debs, and raised in a socialist, racially liberal household, Orval E. Faubus, the governor of Arkansas during the 1957 desegregation crisis, was not the last politician to be hollowed out by ambition

by Benjamin Schwarz

FAUBUS:

The Life and Times of an American Prodigal

by Roy Reed.

University of Arkansas,
408 pages, \$38.00/\$22.00.

IN *Faubus*, Roy Reed has written one of the best political biographies of recent years, yet in many ways his subject's significance is quite limited. To be sure, Orval Faubus, the governor of Arkansas from 1955 to 1967, will forever be known for the crisis he fomented in 1957 with his active opposition to the desegregation of Little Rock's Central High School. But unlike George Wallace, his fellow southern governor and also a foe of desegregation, Faubus did not parlay his stand at the schoolhouse door into a national, or even a regional, political role. Reed, a former reporter for the *Arkansas Gazette* and a former national and foreign correspondent for *The New York Times*, makes no exaggerated claims in this mature and measured biography for Faubus's importance. Rather, his aim is to explore what he calls "the layers of context, nuance, and irony that lift a person's life from the mundane to the extraor-

dinary and make it interesting." He has succeeded.

Reed carefully explicates the two-year series of events surrounding the desegregation of Central High which constituted Faubus's figurative fifteen minutes of fame, but to a large extent this merely fleshes out a story that has already been told with subtlety and precision, albeit without Reed's reportorial acuity, by the historians Numan V. Bartly, David E. Wallace, Irving J. Spitzberg Jr., and Anthony Freyer. Reed's real contribution

lies elsewhere. His book resembles two of the richest political biographies of the past twenty years, Ronald Steel's *Walter Lippmann and the American Century* and Robert Caro's *The Years of Lyndon Johnson*, in that in each case the author set out to focus on the "historic" episodes in his subject's life but found the less-renowned aspects of the story more fascinating. Steel discovered that Lippmann's role in defining and criticizing America's Cold War policies was less compelling than the world of New York

upper-class German Jews that was Lippmann's formative milieu. Caro will get to Johnson's presidency only in the last of his projected four volumes, because he has lingered over such subjects as the transformation of agriculture in central Texas and the ways in which electrification changed the lives of the women of the Texas Hill Country. Similarly, readers of *Faubus* will probably find Reed's astute analysis of the Central High crisis less memorable than his evocation of Faubus's Ozarks youth and of the political and ideological environment of rural socialism in which Faubus was steeped, yet which failed to make a lasting impression on him.

Faubus has been dead just four years, but Reed shows how the world into



SHEL HERSHORN/BLACK STAR

which he was born is unrecognizable today. "In every respect except the paradox of the calendar," Reed maintains, Faubus's "was entirely a nineteenth century boyhood." The Ozarks had so few roads that towns were often connected only by mountainous paths. Cleaning the family's clothes meant first washing the guts of freshly butchered hogs in a frigid mountain stream to make lye soap. Reed's most striking example of the alien world of Faubus's youth is both less clichéd and more obvious than these: "Death," Reed observes, "was everywhere." In his old age Faubus would lead visitors through his childhood community's cemetery, pointing out the small grave depressions of infants and children that filled the yard. At least six of his cousins, including his two closest playmates, died in youth. Two children of a neighboring family died of the flux thirty minutes apart, helping to weave what Reed calls "the endless skein of death." Faubus's were a hard people, inured to events at once terrible and common.

In this respect Faubus's family and neighbors weren't atypical of rural Americans, and throughout his political career Faubus displayed a sense of identification with, and found his greatest number of supporters among, the rural people of his state. His was, Reed argues, "the last proud and pleading cry of the rural voice in his state before the urbanites took over." Also far less unusual than most readers probably think was the political environment in which Faubus was raised. Some will be surprised to learn that Orval Eugene Faubus, whose name is now synonymous with racial demagoguery, was named for the socialist leader Eugene Debs. But in fact, from Shays's Rebellion, in the late 1780s, through the Farmers' Alliance and the Populists, in the 1890s, to the "Red farmers" of the 1910s, the rural United States in general and the rural South and Southwest in particular was the fount of homegrown American radicalism.

THOSE who look at the rural United States and see only a heritage of right-wing intolerance should remember that two centuries before Michael Lind discovered the "overclass," rural Americans recognized that the American political economy was designed by

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LETTERS TO KENNEDY

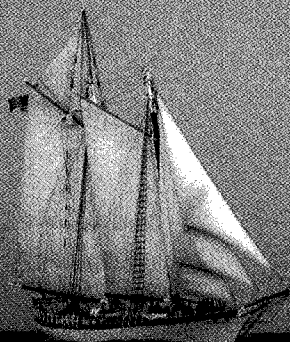
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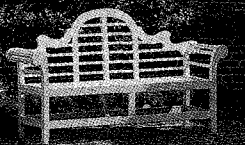
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and for an emerging national economic elite. A hundred years later, while north-eastern liberals' "reform" efforts centered on ways to ensure that capitalism would run more efficiently, white men from Alabama, Georgia, and Texas delivered a devastating critique of corporate capitalism and at the same time declared that "the accident of color can make no difference in the interest of farmers, croppers and laborers." And American socialism found most of its adherents not in New York or Massachusetts but in Oklahoma, Texas, Louisiana, and Arkansas.

One of those socialists was Faubus's father, Sam, who homesteaded his own farm in the Ozarks while also doing itinerant agricultural work from Kansas to Canada to make ends meet. Orval was raised by a man who fervently believed that capitalism was a fraud and that both poor whites and blacks were its victims. Not surprisingly, then, when at the height of the Depression the impoverished Orval Faubus sought a college to attend after teaching school for eleven years, he was drawn to the radically left-wing Commonwealth College, a self-help institution in western Arkansas, which charged a mere \$10 for a semester's tuition. But during his brief tenure at Commonwealth (just how brief was for his Red-baiting opponent the central issue in Faubus's first gubernatorial campaign) it became clear that he differed fundamentally from his high-minded and idealistic father and fellow students in his lack of political commitment and the depth of his personal ambition. Whereas the other students "yearned to be part of a larger cause," Reed writes, "Orval's ambition was . . . to be somebody, 'a big shot,' as one [former student] put it."

Given Faubus's upbringing by a racially tolerant socialist, it would have seemed easy to predict what kind of governor he would be when, after a rapid political rise, he was first elected, in 1954. The South had produced two other governors—Earl Long, the younger brother of Huey Long, of Louisiana; and James "Big Jim" Folsom, of Alabama—who might have made appropriate political models for the son of Sam Faubus. Both were economic populists with rural electoral bases who fought against anti-union laws (Louisiana was

the only state of the former Confederacy to exempt most of its workers from "right to work" coverage), significantly increased funding for welfare and public hospitals, and sponsored other progressive legislation. On racial issues both were well ahead of their time and place. Long was the more cautious of the two, but he nevertheless made no secret of his distaste for segregation, and integrated the New Orleans branch of Louisiana State University (the only truly integrated southern educational institution at the time). Folsom directly confronted white supremacy, derided the emblems of the Confederacy in a manner that no other southern governor would dare even today, vetoed a number of bills that sought to strengthen segregation, and, as one historian put it, "afforded black people greater public recognition than they were apt to receive anywhere else in the nation at the time."

But the forces of reaction that were roused against the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* decision destroyed Long and Folsom's brand of neopopulist southern liberalism. Long energetically fought efforts in the wake of *Brown* to purge black voters from the registration rolls, but during the bitter legislative battle over the issue he suffered a mental collapse that effectively ended his political influence. Folsom complained that he repeatedly tried to pass progressive legislation but every time "they bring up the race issue." In the 1958 contest for governor all the major challengers soundly rejected "Folsomism," and a strict segregationist, John Patterson, replaced Folsom. (George Wallace, who had run against Patterson for the Democratic nomination, famously and ominously explained that "John Patterson out-niggued me. And boys, I'm not goin' to be out-niggued again.")

FOR a man as ambitious as Faubus, then, racial liberalism hardly seemed a formula for electoral success in the South of the mid-1950s. Still, when first elected, the same year the *Brown* decision was announced, Faubus was closely identified with the progressive wing of Arkansas's Democratic Party, having been a protégé of the liberal governor Sidney McMath (who was later to say, regretfully, "I brought Orval down out of the hills and every night ask forgive-

ness"). Faubus's accomplishments as governor at first appeared to justify that identification. On the recommendation of his biracial state educational advisory board Faubus designed and pushed through a landmark spending program for the schools, which, among other things, guaranteed for the first time that all Arkansas schools would remain open for a nine-month academic year. His record on race seemed to place him if not in the Folsom-Long camp then at least squarely with such southern racial moderates as Governors Luther Hodges, of North Carolina, and LeRoy Collins, of Florida: he helped to open all Arkansas colleges and universities to black students; five school districts, in compliance with *Brown*, were quietly desegregated on his watch; he appointed blacks to various state commissions and to the Democratic Party's state committee; and he even bestowed an award on Daisy Bates, the head of the state branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (she would soon be one of his nemeses). In 1955 he was castigated, along with

Hodges and Collins, by James O. Eastland, Mississippi's strict segregationist senator, for his moderate views on school desegregation.

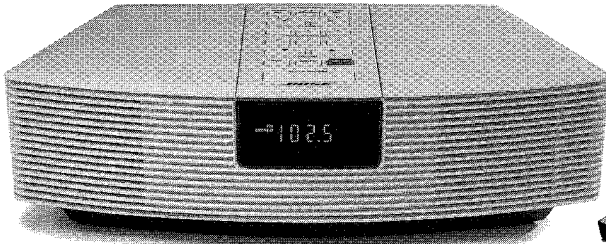
Although wanting to remain a "big shot" may have meant that he was unwilling to attack white supremacy in the all-out, courageous—and futile—manner of Folsom, Orval, as the son of Sam Faubus, nevertheless seemed to have his heart in the right place. Were it not for the passions that *Brown* and the burgeoning civil-rights movement engendered among white Arkansas voters, Faubus would doubtless have remained a moderate on race. In the 1956 Democratic gubernatorial primary, however, it became clear that moderation was politically dangerous. Faubus's chief opponent, Jim Johnson (who made the news not long ago by stirring up the White-water controversy), ran a vicious campaign centered on opposition to the *Brown* decision and to Faubus's moderate stance. Although Faubus won the nomination by a two-to-one margin, it was the closest election in which he would run until 1964. With his unerring

political instincts, Faubus discerned the road he would have to take to satisfy his ambition. As he confessed to Johnson years later, "You made me take positions that served me well politically."

The most famous of these positions, of course, were his dispatch of the Arkansas National Guard to forestall the desegregation of Central High and, a year later, his closing of all four of Little Rock's high schools rather than allow them to submit to desegregation. ("Integration" would be a misnomer for the Little Rock school board's federally approved token desegregation plans.) The middle third of Reed's book deals specifically with this highly complex story, which it is impossible to encapsulate adequately here. In the end Reed's judgment confirms that of previous chroniclers of the Little Rock crisis: for better or worse, Faubus was utterly unprincipled. As for the better, unlike Jim Johnson and his fellow racist rabble-rousers, Faubus at the time clearly did not act out of hatred; he was not a committed racist defending white supremacy. Rather, he simply believed that his actions were

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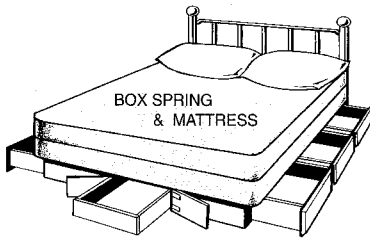
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necessary to save his political career. Faubus was confronted with the prospect of angry whites converging on Little Rock from all over Arkansas to commit violent acts in protest over Central High's desegregation. (Reed, again confirming earlier accounts, concludes that although Faubus exaggerated the dangers to justify his politically motivated actions, nonetheless his "concern about violence was legitimate.") Had Faubus done nothing, he would have been blamed for failing to forestall any violence that did occur. Had he ordered the National Guard to protect the black students who

were attempting to desegregate Central High, he would have been turned out of office. Even white moderates found desegregation by order of the federal government a bitter pill, and a governor who furthered it actively and with force of arms would have virtually no support among white voters. To Faubus, there was only one solution. Calling out the Guard allowed him to prevent violence while clearly displaying opposition to desegregation.

FAUBUS is an easy villain. But that this political coward had so little room to maneuver means that the indictment must be extended. Arkansas had a number of prominent moderates, including Senator J. William Fulbright, Congressmen Brooks Hays and Jim Trimble, and the editors of the *Arkansas Gazette*. These men, along with moderates in the political and business communities, could have declared that the *Brown* decision was now the law of the land and they would see it upheld, thus providing Faubus and countless local politicians and school officials who might have wished to abide by desegregation with influential allies and a powerful "cover." Instead Fulbright, Hays, and Trimble, along with the rest of Arkansas's congressional delegation, joined with most other southern representatives and senators in signing the 1956 "Southern Manifesto," which essentially declared the *Brown* decision

unconstitutional and legitimized "massive resistance" by "all lawful means" to it. (The *Gazette*, which was later courageously to condemn Faubus's actions during the Little Rock crisis, failed to oppose the manifesto.) By supporting the

manifesto for the sake of expedience, though they were opposed to it on principle, Arkansas's moderates gave Faubus no choice.

But cowardice was hardly limited to Arkansas. It was an open secret that President Dwight Eisenhower—who was eventually forced by circumstances to federalize the Arkansas Guard and send Army units to restore order to Little Rock



RODNEY DUNGAN/ARKANSAS DEMOCRAT-GAZETTE

Campaigning, 1962

and to desegregate Central High School—disagreed with the *Brown* decision. (Reed asserts that Eisenhower was "almost certainly more of a segregationist than Orval Faubus.") More important, Eisenhower's national political calculations—Republican strategists hoped to expand their support among "Eisenhower Democrats" in the South—dictated that he go to great lengths not to appear to be forcing desegregation. So when, early in the crisis, Faubus, seeking a politically palatable exit from the quandary in which he found himself, asked the Eisenhower Administration to assume responsibility for the safe desegregation of Central High, he was told bluntly that the national government did not wish to become involved. Not unjustifiably, Faubus charged that the federal government, in "cramming integration down our throats" but refusing "to help keep order," "intended for me to do their dirty work for them." Numan Bartly, in *The New South* (1995), neatly summarized the situation, finding plenty of blame to go around.

The Faubus administration was willing to accept desegregation so long as the governor did not have to assume any responsibility for it. The Eisenhower administration was willing to accept desegregation so long as the president could remain aloof from it. Such a complete vacuum of leadership invited demagoguery and irresponsibility, and Faubus ultimately

supplied it. Irresponsible stewardship was in evidence everywhere, but the irresolution of the federal government determined in large measure the extent and duration of the crisis.

What ultimately emerges from Reed's portrait is the insidiousness of weakness. Having embraced the segregationist cause to save his political skin, Faubus soon found that it was the surest bet to maintain—and enhance—his power. In the 1956 primary he had been vulnerable on the right, but in 1958, in the wake of the Little Rock crisis, he easily won his party's nomination for a third term as governor—and remained in that office longer than any other governor in Arkansas history. He was no longer acting entirely from cynical opportunism, however: while his rhetoric concerning race became uglier, he became more principled, because, as Reed shows, he seemed, at least for a time, to believe it. As Faubus turned to the right, he signed outrageous bills that the legislature had passed, including a notorious one requiring that blood donations in hospitals be labeled by race, and one making membership in the Communist Party a felony. He also used the state police to spy on his political enemies and NAACP officials. (Reed argues that with his spy network and, more important, his network of political patronage, Faubus probably wielded more influence statewide than any governor other than Huey Long.)

But Reed, while clearly appalled by all this, is too scrupulously fair to oversimplify Faubus's story. He carefully assesses Faubus's many progressive accomplishments in the years between the Little Rock crisis and 1967—from economic development to unprecedented spending on education to improved hospitals to the building of a housing-and-training center for retarded children—and is forced to conclude that in many areas Faubus's record was "generally commendable, sometimes excellent."

THE twenty-seven years from the time he left office until his death were a period of almost uninterrupted decline for Faubus. His quick rise from obscurity had left him with no career to which to return; he drifted from job to job, including theme-park manager and bank teller. His personal life was a sham-

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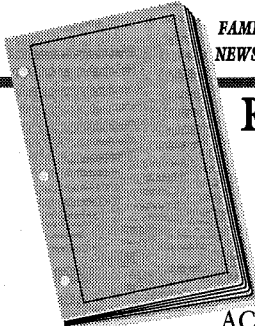
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bles. He divorced his wife of thirty-seven years to marry a woman twenty-nine years his junior; that stormy marriage also ended in divorce. His son committed suicide, and his second ex-wife was raped and murdered. During his third marriage (to a woman thirty-three years his junior) he and his wife both found they had cancer, from which they would eventually die.

Although Faubus briefly strutted on the national stage, in the end his life signified nothing because he stood for nothing. In the years after he left office, more and more Arkansans were eager to live him down, and despite periodic attempts to revive his political career, he was increasingly a forgotten man. As Sam Faubus's son he had done some good things, but he had also acted horrendously in service of nothing more than petty ambition. Perhaps Brooks Hays defined Faubus most succinctly, when he declared during the Little Rock crisis, "I can probe him and probe him . . . and I'm not finding any core." ☛

A Fictional Portrait of John Brown

by James M. McPherson

CLOUDSPLITTER

by Russell Banks.
HarperFlamingo, 758 pages,
\$27.50.

"CLOUDSPLITTER" is the English word for the Indian name of Mount Tahawus, in the Adirondacks, 120 miles north of Albany and near the rural community of North Elba, where the abolitionist John Brown established a home in 1849. But the real cloudsplitter in this novel is John Brown himself, who launched lightning strikes against pro-slavery settlers in Kansas and whose thunderbolt descent on Harpers Ferry, in 1859, lit flames of civil war that were not fully quenched even at Appomattox,

six years later. Russell Banks has constructed this complex narrative on two levels. The first is the story of John Brown and his large family from the 1830s to the moment of his defeat at Harpers Ferry. The second and more profound level consists of a prolonged meditation on the interrelationships of blacks and whites and fathers and sons.

The first-person narrator is a fictionalized Owen Brown, John Brown's third son and his principal lieutenant in the Kansas wars. The story takes the form of autobiographical notes compiled by Owen in 1899 for Katherine Mayo, the research assistant of Oswald Garrison Villard, who published in 1910 what still stands as the fullest biography of John Brown. The knowledgeable reader will recognize how Banks has employed novelistic license to describe events that never happened, to place Owen at scenes where in reality he was not present, and to date his composition of these notes eight years after the real Owen died. But of course this is a work of fiction, not history, and these contrivances enable Banks to construct a version of "truth" beyond that of literal history.

John Brown was an Old Testament warrior-prophet transplanted into the nineteenth century. He believed in a God of wrath and justice. He also considered himself God's instrument to free the slaves and punish their owners for the sin of holding human beings in bondage. One of his favorite biblical passages was from Hebrews 9:22: "Without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sins." Brown possessed a powerful personality that enabled him to dominate his seven grown sons, most of whom became soldiers in his war against slavery and three of whom were killed in that war. Brown's strange charisma also won other allies, both black and white, who followed him to death and martyrdom at Harpers Ferry or provided him with financial support for his armed crusade against the pro-slavery power that dominated Congress, courts, the presidency, and the Army in the 1850s.

Many people then and later believed that John Brown was insane. This novel, however, conveys the message that Brown was insane only if slavery and white supremacy were sane. As Owen expresses it, his father had a capacity singular among white men to see the world

from the black man's point of view. From that perspective the insane became sane, and vice versa. "Something deep within [John Brown's] soul, regardless of his own skin color . . . went out to the souls of American Negroes," Owen writes,

so that he was able to ally himself with them in their struggle against slavery and American racialism, not merely because he believed they were in the right, but because he believed that somehow he himself was one of them. . . . Father's progression from activist to martyr, his slow march to willed disaster, can be viewed, not as a descent into madness, but as a reasonable progression—especially if one consider the political strength of those who in those days meant to keep chattel slavery the law of the land. . . . due to our obsession, we were, as it were, insane. Which to the Negroes, to Lyman, made us perfectly comprehensible and trustworthy—sane.

The Lyman in this quotation is Lyman Epps, a free black farmer and a neighbor of the Browns' at North Elba, where the wealthy abolitionist Gerrit Smith had granted land to blacks and to John Brown to establish a kind of exemplary interracial rural community. From North Elba, Epps and the Browns carry escaping slaves to Canada on the Underground Railroad from 1850 to 1855, when most of the Browns go to the Kansas territory. Epps was an actual person, but in this novel he looms larger than he did in real life. He plays a pivotal role in Owen Brown's self-awakening, which even more than John Brown's progression to martyrdom is the central theme of the novel.

Owen wishes to transcend his whiteness and, like his father, enter into the soul of blackness. But in the presence of blacks he cannot forget his color, which "angered me in a way that left me secretly ashamed." Owen and Lyman, portrayed here as being about the same age, become close friends. But Owen realizes, in a sort of shameful epiphany, that he has fallen in love with Lyman's wife, Susan—an emotion that, as he will come to realize, is really a displacement of his love for Lyman. Consumed by guilt, he flails himself and experiences a surge of hatred for Lyman, which produces another round of racial guilt that is purged only when, in a climactic scene, Lyman

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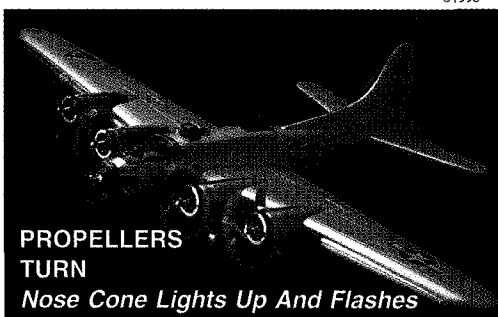
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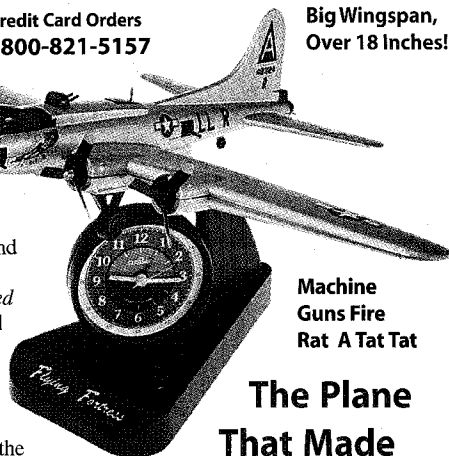
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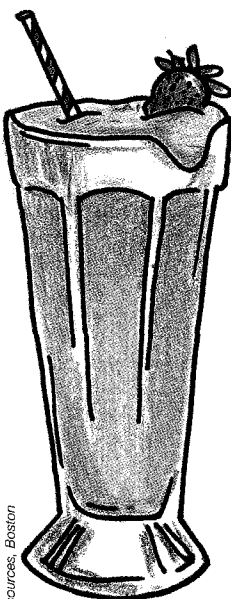
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What are the facts?

The reality, regrettably, has not at all lived up to the agreement made. While Arafat and other Palestinian leaders proclaim their peaceful intentions in English before Western audiences, they are brutally frank when they address their own people in Arabic and away from Western television cameras. There is constant incitement to violence and frank declaration of the ultimate goal—namely the destruction of the State of Israel and its replacement by "Palestine," an Arab state.

The statements that follow were made by Palestinian leaders within the last twelve months. They are representative of many others in the same vein.

PA CHAIRMAN YASSER ARAFAT (Palestinian Television, August 9, 1997): "We must confront them, we must confront them. We must confront them in every sense of the word."

YASSER ARAFAT (Palestinian Television, August 6, 1997): "...let us commit ourselves before Allah and the Palestinian people that we shall lead the coming battle as we have led previous battles. An oath is an oath and a promise is a promise. The whole world stands by us, while they are alone. They are afraid, but we are not. We cling to the oath and the promise. The Palestinian people is faithful to its oath, the one which we swore upon the first day when the initial shot was fired and the first of our martyrs fell... We are marching together with the blessing of Allah, my brothers, we are marching together to Jerusalem, Jerusalem, Jerusalem."

KAMEL HAMID, HEAD OF FATAH (A FACTION OF THE PLO) (At a Rally, August 10, 1997): "...all means are legitimate to uproot the despicable occupation."

SHEIKH HAMED BITAWI, CHAIRMAN OF THE PALESTINE RELIGIOUS SCHOLARS ASSOCIATION (July 27, 1997): "That which befell the infidel nations will also occur to the State of Israel. We are certain that Allah will destroy the State of Israel either through natural disasters, such as an earthquake, or at the hands of the Moslems, or both."

PA MUFTI IKRAMA SABRI (In a sermon at Al-Aksa Mosque, July 11, 1997): "Oh Allah, destroy America for she is ruled by Zionist Jews... Allah shall take revenge on behalf of his prophet against the colonialist settlers who are sons of monkeys and pigs..."

PA MINISTER FOR JERUSALEM AFFAIRS FEISAL HUSSEINI (May 18, 1997): "Israel is attempting to obstruct peace... The only option remaining for us will be an alternative option... war."

YASSER ARAFAT (Addressing a crowd in Tulkarem, April 28, 1997): "I now see the walls of Jerusalem, the mosques of Jerusalem, the churches of Jerusalem. My brothers! With blood and with spirit we will redeem you, Palestine!"

NABIL RAMLAWI (At a session of the U.N. Commission on Human Rights, Reported March 17, 1997): "Israeli authorities... infected by injection 300 Palestinian children with the HIV virus during the years of the intifada."

All of these quotations are only a minute fraction of the inflammatory statements with which Palestinian leaders whip up their followers to a frenzy of hatred and violence against Israel. It is in line with all the other acts of defiance and non-compliance on the part of the Palestinians. Most egregiously perhaps, that famous Covenant that unequivocally calls for the destruction of Israel has never been rescinded. Instead of combating terrorist activity, the Palestinian Authority (P.A.) continues to release well-known members of terrorist groups. Another blatant violation is the size and the weaponry of the so-called P.A. police force, which was fixed by Oslo at a maximum of 24,000, but which is now estimated at over 50,000 members, many of them former terrorists. How do people expect Israel to bring further "sacrifices for peace" to appease these fanatics and why, in the face of daily evidence of Palestinian intransigence and murderous hatred, should Israel even consider turning over vital strategic assets to those who are openly committed to its destruction? Peace will not come to this part of the world until the Palestinians and the Arab nations commit themselves to full acceptance of Israel and are willing to live with it in peace. And that day seems to be a long way off.

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accidentally shoots and kills himself in circumstances that Owen could have prevented if he had acted in time.

Owen thus convinces himself that he is a murderer and can atone for this atrocious act only by becoming the cold-blooded killer of slave owners and destroyer of slavery that he believes his father wants him to become. "I was the man," Owen writes,

who had never been able to forget that Lyman, while he lived, was black. Thus, until this moment, I had never truly loved him. He was a dead man now—finally, a man of no race. And as surely as if I had pulled the trigger myself, I was the man, the white man, who, because of Lyman's color and mine, had killed him. It was as if there had been no other way for me to love him.

There was nothing for love, now, but all-out war against the slavers. . . . Father would be my North Star. . . . I had become outwardly a hard man, a grim, silent warrior in my father's army, soon to be a killer more feared by the slavers for his cold, avenging spirit than any Free-Soil man in all of Kansas. More feared even than Father.

This passage suggests another dimension of Owen's self-awakening—his contrapuntal dependent-independent relationship with his father. Here Banks hints at an Oedipal interpretation, but he never develops it. Owen's mother died when he was eight, a devastating experience, and Owen resented his father's marrying again even as he experienced overwhelming love for his father, who forgave his youthful sins: "It was as if his words had cleansed me, for at once I felt uplifted and strong again. Whatever Father wished me now to do, I would do without argument, without hesitancy, without fear."

Instead of Oedipus, the Old Testament stories of Job and of Abraham and Isaac become the models for this father-son relationship. God tested Job's faith by letting Satan take everything from him—his wealth, his servants, his family, his health. Yet Job refused to curse God, and the Lord rewarded him by restoring health, wealth, and family.

The figure of Job was, of course, like no one so much as Father himself. As Job stood to God, Father did also. My terrible understanding was that I, too,

was like no one so much as Job. Not, however, in my relation to God; but in my relation to Father.

Owen tries repeatedly to break free of his father's domination, to become his own man, like his older brothers Jason and John Jr., but he cannot. Like Isaac, he is compelled to obey his father, even if his father is commanded by the Lord to slay him as a sacrifice.

The death of Lyman Epps, by compelling Owen to become a killer of slave owners to atone for his sin, seems for a while to have reversed the relationship of father and son. When the time comes for revenge against pro-slavery depredations in Kansas, it is Owen who ruthlessly instigates the cold-blooded murder of five settlers in the infamous Pottawatomie massacre. John Brown was beset with indecision, so "I reached forward and banged roughly on the door" of the first victim's cabin; "I kicked it and swiftly put my shoulder into it"; "I remember raising the blade of my sword . . . and then I brought it down and buried it in the skull," and so on for two pages (emphasis added). "And Father? Where was Father? All the while, he stood away from us, and he alone did not use his sword. He watched."

Shortly before Lyman Epps shoots himself, he tells Owen that Owen isn't half the man his father is. But after Pottawatomie "I now found myself twice the man my father was." Yet in another ironic twist Pottawatomie galvanizes John Brown into becoming a fearsome guerilla warrior, "so that before long it was no longer required of me to goad or brace him in the least, and in fact I found myself barely able to keep pace with him."

THE final eighty pages of the novel, culminating in the Harpers Ferry raid, are something of an anticlimax, in contrast to the raid's climactic status in the history of the real John Brown. This anticlimax is important mainly for Owen's "betrayal" of his father and those brothers who died or were captured at Harpers Ferry. Left behind at the farm where the raiders holed up while they prepared for the assault, Owen is to take charge of arming the slaves who his father expects will flock to the banner of insurrection. When the assault collapses in disastrous failure and no slaves ap-

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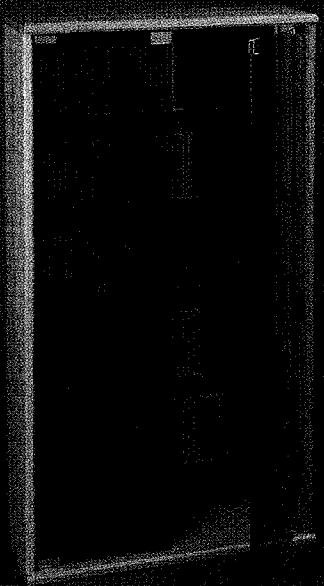
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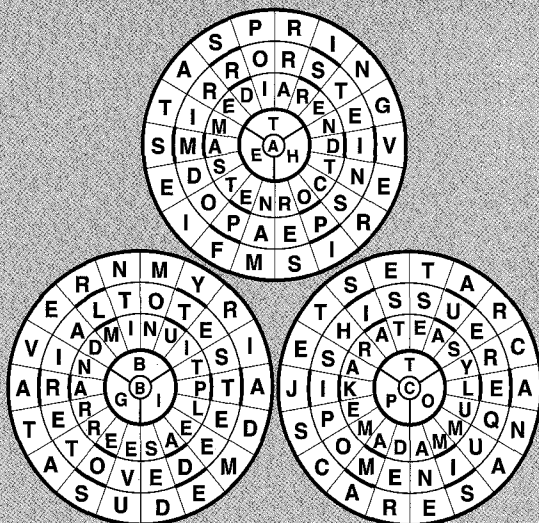
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pear, Owen alone among the Browns escapes and survives to tell the tale. When he fails to join his father and brothers in Harpers Ferry, becoming instead an Isaac making his escape while "my father, Father Abraham [, was] making his terrible, final sacrifice to his God," it was "as if, after a lifetime bound to my father's fierce will and companionship by heavy steel manacles and chains, I had watched them come suddenly unlocked, and I had simply, almost casually, pitched them aside."

Of course it did not actually happen that way. Owen could have done nothing to save his father and brothers. And many other crucial events in the novel did not occur as portrayed, or never occurred at all. Lyman Epps did not shoot himself; indeed, he sang John Brown's favorite hymns at Brown's funeral, in North Elba. For me as a historian to point this out is not to criticize Russell Banks as a novelist. In an "Author's Note," Banks states clearly that he has "altered and rearranged" historical events and characters "to suit the strict purposes of storytelling. . . . Accordingly, the book should be read solely as a work of fiction, not as a version or interpretation of history." Fair enough. Unlike some of my literal-minded colleagues, who grind their teeth in exasperation at every departure from fact in a historical novel, I am quite willing to recognize—and to learn from—the novelist's license to reconstruct the past in the interests of a reality deeper than literal fact.

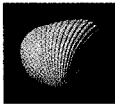
But I do confess annoyance at the numerous minor historical errors in *Cloud-splitter* that have no bearing whatsoever on the development of the author's story and would harm nothing if they were corrected. Such errors seem to indicate a certain indifference to the careful research that should underlie historical fiction. One or two or even half a dozen mistakes of this sort would be negligible, but the large number herein become a vexation. To mention but a few: the number of slaves in 1859 was four million, not three; Martin Van Buren did not establish the National Bank but helped to destroy it; John Brown was executed on December 2, 1859, not December 12; William Lloyd Garrison was not a Quaker; Franklin Sanborn could not have been an editor of *The Atlantic Monthly* in 1850 or 1851, because the magazine was founded

in 1857; none of the federal troops in Kansas in 1856 were conscripts; Sharps rifles were manufactured by a private firm in Hartford, not by the government in Harpers Ferry; and Lewis Washington, one of the hostages captured by the Harpers Ferry raiders, was a collateral rather than a direct descendant of George Washington. Finally, Owen repeatedly refers to Oswald Garrison Villard, for whom this "Secret History" of John Brown is intended, as "Professor Villard" of Columbia University. Villard was a

journalist, and a proprietor and an editor of *The Nation* and *The New York Evening Post*, but never a professor at Columbia or any other university.

For most readers, however, such petty errors will not detract from the powerful passages and profound insights in this novel. It humanizes John Brown, a figure all too often demonized or idolized in history as well as in fiction. Our understanding of this tragic era in the American experience will never be quite the same again. ☼

BRIEF REVIEWS



Black Ajax

by George MacDonald Fraser.
Carroll & Graf, 256 pages,
\$23.00.

Is it possible that Mr. Fraser has exhausted the supply of satire-worthy Victorian wars? His latest novel concerns boxing in England at the end of the Napoleonic Wars, when a former slave from America made a brief but spectacular career in the ring. The subject gives this adroit historical novelist a wide field for period slang, technical explanations in the lingo of the time, and the eccentricities of the Fancy. Most of the book's characters were real people, allowing for deft parodies of Hazlitt and of the sporting press. Prinny makes a brief appearance. The story is told by a number of observers whose voices and points of view are nicely distinguished. The bare-knuckle bouts are bloody and savage. If the novel lacks the excitement and humor of the author's Flashman tales, it is probably because the reader knows from the start that Tom Molineaux, ex-field-hand, cannot survive in a strange country where "the allegiances and alliances of the prize ring are somewhat more confused than the intricacies of the Spanish Succession, and . . . its rivalries and vendettas cast the petty intrigues of the

Borgias quite into the shade." Poor Tom is no hero. He arouses the kind of abstract pity that one might feel for a rat in a laboratory maze. He cannot be amusing, and the author does not attempt to make him so. The novel is a story of a march to disaster in a grim world.

Jacob's Ladder

by Donald McCaig.
Norton, 448 pages, \$25.95.

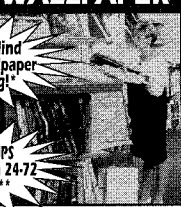
Mr. McCaig's fine novel begins in the mountains of western Virginia shortly before the Civil War, and follows the members of three white families and their black slaves through the hostilities. The whites are all loyal Confederates, although with varying degrees of enthusiasm. The blacks, equally interesting and important characters, consider the changing world and keep their plans to themselves. All the characters develop as the murderous fighting wears on, modifying beliefs and conduct for better or worse, doing things they had never contemplated and enduring what they had never thought possible. These changes give the book its impressive persuasiveness as a re-creation of realities that underlie much of what has happened since in this country. Mr. McCaig rarely takes the reader inside the heads

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of his characters. What they do and say shows how they think and forces the reader to think as well, while the lively, and still relevant, action proceeds.

At the Water's Edge

by Carl Zimmer.

Free Press, 290 pages, \$25.00.

Mr. Zimmer, an honored science journalist, reports what has been learned (and how, and by whom) about two great evolutionary events—the conversion of fish to land animals, and the subsequent return of land animals to the sea. These studies depend on the discovery of fossils, and fossil hunting, although slow, can be almost melodramatic in the jolts and surprises it inflicts on paleontologists and the entertainment it provides for Mr. Zimmer's readers. The author observes that "there is always a little sadness mixed into great discoveries because they take away some of the confusion that brightens life." Mr. Zimmer avoids confusion but leaves life among the fossils agreeably bright.

The Smart Set

by Thomas Quinn Curtiss.

Applause, 272 pages, \$28.95.

While purporting to be an account of the co-editing of *The Smart Set* by George Jean Nathan and H. L. Mencken, Mr. Curtiss's book is primarily a history of the New York theater during the years in which Nathan battled against the prevalence of sentimental stupidity on the stage. Mencken's similar campaign in the publishing world does not get a fair shake, because the author is an impassioned theater buff. With the writer's bias accepted, the book is unpretentious, anecdotal, breezily readable, and essentially superficial.

Gardener Cook

by Christopher Lloyd,

with photographs by Howard Sooley.

Willow Creek Press, 256 pages,

\$29.50.

Mr. Lloyd is a well-known gardening authority in Britain. He has learned to cook what he grows. He shares his expertise in both areas. The horticultural advice may not always apply on this side of the Atlantic, but it is clear, simple, often quite humorous, and no more like-

ly to lead a hopeful amateur to disappointment than the dreams aroused by seed catalogues. Mr. Sooley, an accomplished fashion photographer, presents peaches and parsnips in the highest style. The collaboration pleases the eye and tempts the tongue.

Aubrey Beardsley

by Stephen Calloway.

Abrams, 224 pages, \$39.95.

Mr. Calloway quotes one Chris Snodgrass—"Beardsley's stylized irony recuperates the dislocations it reveals, serving to reinforce the anesthetizing effects of his harmonizing aesthetic techniques, adding another veneer of 'style' to distance and mitigate the dissonant metaphysical implications his works expose." Mr. Calloway then promises not to undertake a similar approach—to the great relief of any sensible reader—and keeps his word with contemporary sources for the facts of Beardsley's career and a minimum of speculation on possible reasons for the artist's addiction to the sexually ambiguous and the subtly subversive. A precocious success at twenty, dead of tuberculosis at twenty-five, Beardsley was, quite simply, like nobody else in his control of line and his use of black and white space, as the book's illustrations prove. One can only wish there were more of them.

Without

by Donald Hall.

Houghton Mifflin, 81 pages, \$22.00.

Mr. Hall's poems on the death of his wife, the poet Jane Kenyon, are direct, devoid of obvious poetic devices, dependent on ordinary words and the patterns of the speaking voice. That voice, however, is extraordinarily moving as it evokes helplessness amid the tangle of medical equipment, the pain of watching a loved partner die, the feel of a house where "Your presence . . . is almost as enormous / and painful as your absence." With the dog on one side of the bed and the cat curled on the other, he notes, "I'm what they've got; / they know it," and leaves the reader to finish the thought. Summed up in "Remembered happiness is agony; / so is remembered agony," the anguish of loss strikes like a fist.

—Phoebe-Lou Adams



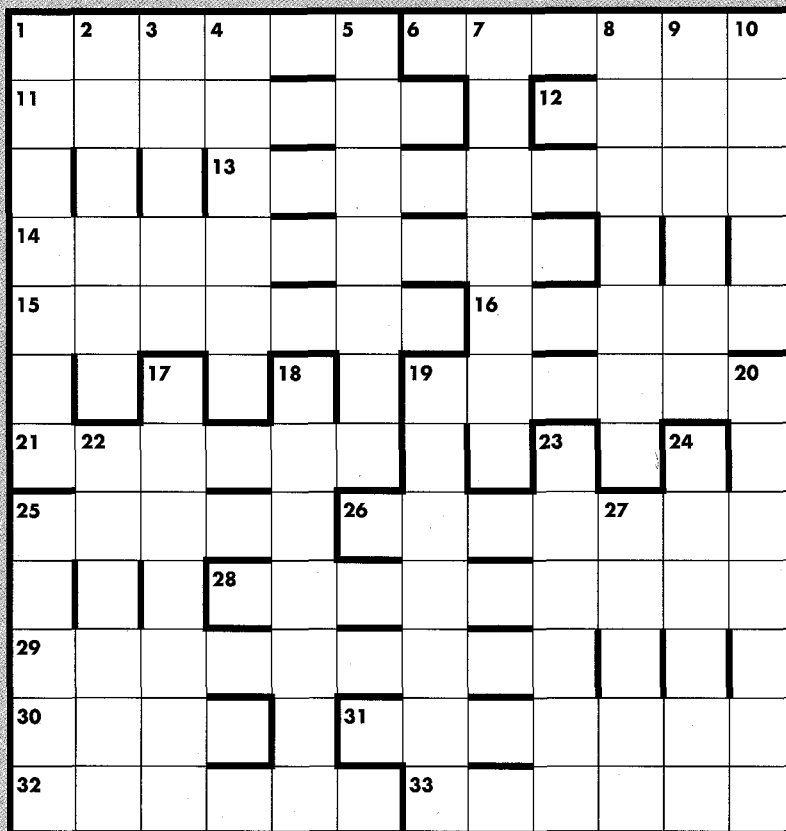
THE PUZZLER

by Emily Cox and Henry Rathvon

Picnic

With this puzzle we invite you to a crossword lunch at which extra helpings are plentiful. We've fed one tidbit (a single letter) to each of the 36 clues below. In each case this letter is extraneous to the clue's solution, but taken in order (Acrosses preceding Downs) the 36 letters will pose a question of eight words. Meanwhile, we've fed one extra letter into each of 11 clue answers, fattening them into new words in the grid. Each of these letters falls in a cross-checked square. You may wish to circle the letters, which will spell (column by column from left to right) the answer to our 36-letter question. Eight clue answers and one new diagram entry are capitalized.

The solution to last month's Puzzler appears on page 128.



Across

1. Club's lawyer? (6)
6. Ring-tailed critter eats up thicket (6)
11. Auntie is a French composer (7)
12. Cloak that tore at the back (4)
13. I grease our convertible for tricky exploits (9)
14. Check new order for Pa (9)
15. *True Lies* cast is more robust (7)
16. Sees what swingers hit (5)
19. Case of wee hesitations in consumers (5)
21. Small jest with small whip (6)
25. Prepare for battle in dead spot in Italy (5)
26. Wandering with Brad Cartier (7)
28. Vince, concerned with harboring wickedness, is dishonest (9)

29. Irish heroine in a dungeon I'm frisking? (4,5)
30. Warn ram vocally (4)
31. "City transit" written inside chair leg (7)
32. Ida was first wasted (5)
33. Some bacon for the lady chasing rats (6)

Down

1. Stick purse outside place for plums (7)
2. Faithless aunt goes topless on Parish Street (6)
3. Half of Troy is infiltrated by Nile groups (5)
4. Study acid's runs (5)
5. Heard of royal bird's sorrow (6)
7. Cause no storms, making sea good (7)
8. Pastor's beginning to bury British swordsmith (6)
9. Drunk on spree brings you key (6)
10. Shrewd of Neptune aliens, making traps (4)
17. Pro used plastic gathered into folds (6)
18. Maneuver for trail of yellow fish (6)
19. Sailor hurt in front of diner (7)
20. Someone pulling out in traffic finally caught by speeder (7)
22. Kuwait aristocrat has Japanese game name (5)
23. Truce details false deeds (5)
24. Sorceress starts in chanting nine rhymes come evening (5)
25. Cats in Siam raised the wrong way (5)
27. Fraction of camp shelter over child's head (5)

Note: The instructions above are for this month's puzzle only. It is assumed that you know how to decipher clues. For a complete introduction to clue-solving, send an addressed, stamped long envelope to The Atlantic Puzzler, 77 North Washington Street, Boston, Mass. 02114.

WORD COURT

by Barbara Wallraff

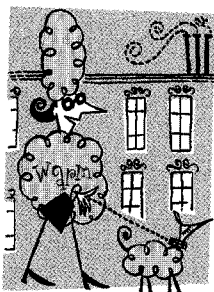
A very common usage emanating from radio and television has me baffled. I hear the following from the weather reporter: "Get out a warm jacket, because tomorrow we will have cold temperatures in our area."

I have always thought of temperature as a dimension, with the word modifiable only by high or low. I believe that cold and hot are adjectives defining the reactions that animals or plants manifest to low or high temperatures. How can a temperature be cold? Am I all wet here, or are we seeing a mass misuse of the language?

Julio Burroughs
San Bruno, Calif.

You're quite right that *hot* or *cold*—or *warm* or *cool*—temperatures may not always be the best way to put it. Recently, for example, I came across "he employed humor as a way of reducing tension often caused by the *hot temperature* and humidity." How about *heat*?

And yet if the problem were just as you say, how could the recommended jacket be *warm*? The conceptual relationships of English adjectives to their nouns are multifarious, and it will be a *sad day*, a *sorry state of affairs*, an *unhappy turn of events*, and so forth if our language ever loses this characteristic. *Hot* and the rest of them as modifiers for *temperature* fall well within the acceptable bounds. Indeed, these examples convey something subtler than what could be conveyed with *high* or *low*: "Gardenia augusta . . . demands a sunny south window, *warm temperatures* (above 65 degrees day and night), high humidity and an acid soil underfoot"; "Cheesemaking in the Cheddar Valley, where the famous caves were used to store cheese at a constant *cool temperature*, can be traced back more than 800 years."



In the January Word Court, Molly Huddleston was concerned about the plural of beer. She closed her letter by saying "Please respond, so that (hopefully) I can rub it in . . ."

I was surprised and disappointed that your response did not chastise Ms. Huddleston for the incorrect use of *hopefully*. I'm sure that you will agree that *hopefully* means "full of hope" and not "I hope." Did she mean ". . . so that (full of hope) I can rub it in . . ."? I doubt it.

Ms. Huddleston is obviously interested in correct English usage. Let's help her out. The use of *hopefully* to mean "I hope" is wrong, wrong, wrong!

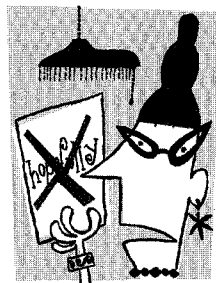
R. L. Gallawa
Boulder, Colo.

I wish it were as simple as that.

As you know, the problem with *hopefully* in a sentence like "*Hopefully*, this explanation will be clear" is that it is an adverb modifying no word that appears in the sentence. In the example I just gave, in fact, there isn't even anything present that is capable of hoping.

But is that a problem? Other adverbs are often used in much the same way: "*Presumably*, my best efforts have gone into making this explanation clear"; "*Mercifully*, this explanation will be

finished soon"; "*Frankly*, this explanation may not be clear." These are known as sentence adverbs, and no one calls them incorrect.



But the problem with considering *hopefully* a sentence adverb like any other is that many people, like you, who care about language happen to loathe this usage. And yet using the word in the old-fashioned, modifying-the-verb way ("*Hopefully*, I began writing about this topic, eager to share what I know") often seems either bizarre or su-

percilious. It's too bad, but the word just isn't very serviceable anymore.

Though I do share your preference, I'm afraid we are going to lose this argument one day. I only hope I won't have to concede until I'm an old, old woman.

Reading a recent book by Noam Chomsky, I discovered that he had no problem using the word *niggardly* (stingy). Although I always knew that etymologically the word has no racist overtone whatsoever, I was reluctant to use it, because I felt that it could be misinterpreted. But lately, after some thought—and after seeing that Chomsky (no slouch when it comes to matters of our language) uses the word freely—I decided, Forget all these uneducated self-righteous PC word-police types; I have grown to like the word, and will use it as I please. I feel that to do otherwise is to acquiesce in the degeneration of our common English language. Am I justified?

John Gutman
Forest Knolls, Calif.

Whether or not you should use the word (whose origin is in an ancient Scandinavian word meaning "stingy") depends on your audience. If you hope to be persuasive to a group of "uneducated self-righteous PC word-police types," then perhaps *niggardly* isn't your best word choice. If, though, you are addressing a learned convention of etymologists . . .



Have you recently had a language dispute that you would like this column to resolve? Write to Word Court in care of *The Atlantic Monthly*, 77 North Washington Street, Boston, MA 02114, or send E-mail to MsGrammar@TheAtlantic.com. All letters become the property of Word Court.

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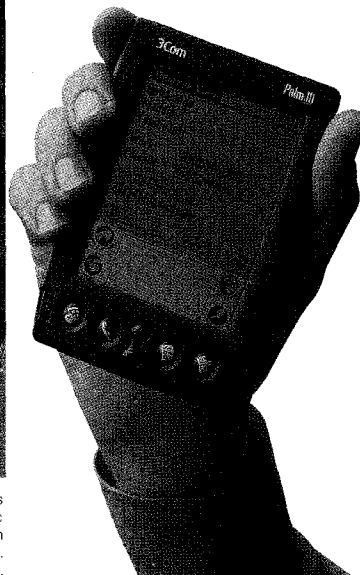
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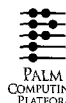
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